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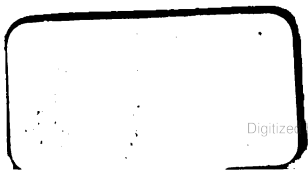
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THE  
WHITE LILY  
OF THE GREAT SAHARA





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GRANVILLE AND ZARA.

THE  
**White Lily of the Great Sahara**

A ROMANCE OF THE ALGERIAN ARABS  
UNDER ABD-EL-KADER

BY  
**CHARLES H. EDEN**  
AUTHOR OF "RALPH SOMERVILLE," "THE TWIN BROTHERS OF ELFVEDALE,"  
"CORALIE," "CHINA, HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE," &c., &c.



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THE  
*White Lily of the Great Sahara.*

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CHAP. I.—THE MIDSHIPMAN'S BERTH.

“LEAR glass, quartermaster?”  
“Clear glass, sir,” replies the weather-beaten old sailor, holding the little instrument aloft, so that the faintly shining moon may attest the truth of his assertion.

With a sweep of his right arm Bob Granville launches the log-ship good six fathoms clear of the starboard quarter, when the line instantly tautens, and the velocity with which the reel spins round indicates that Her Majesty's steam-sloop *Syren* is ploughing her way through the troubled

water, at the utmost speed with which engines of five hundred horse power and a heavy spread of canvas can force her. A few seconds afterwards the midshipman, through whose fingers the line has been running, feels a smart sting, as the wet piece of bunting indicating the commencement of the knotted fathoms is hurried past his hand.

"Turn," he cries in a short, sharp voice; and at the word Newbould the quartermaster reverses the glass, and gazes intently at it to detect the exact instant when the sand shall have left the upper compartment vacant, and denoted the lapse of fourteen seconds.

"Stop," he cries, stretching out his unoccupied arm to assist Bob, who has checked the line at the word, and is now hanging on with his full strength to prevent the wet cord from slipping through his fingers.

"Here, you reelers, lend me a hand, or it will take charge. Confound the peg, how hard it sticks! The line will carry away if it doesn't give. Come, that's better," he

adds, as the lessened resistance shows that the triangular log-ship no longer presents a full front to the water; "now where's the nearest knot?"

"Here it is, sir," says Newbould, who has been feeling along the line; "the sixth knot is just inside the taffrail."

Bob verifies this, and goes to make his report to the officer of the watch, shaking the cold water off his hands the while.

"Twelve and two, sir," he says, touching his hat as he reaches the port paddle-box, on which the lieutenant and the captain are standing in conversation.

"What's that you say?" questions the latter, turning abruptly round. "Only twelve and two, Mr. Granville! Are you sure you have hove the log right? Why, she ought to be going fourteen with this breeze. That P. & O. steamer we saw this morning will beat us after all, unless we look sharp;" and the captain withdraws grumblingly to his cabin, there to examine the chart, and in consultation with the master to see if, by

hugging the coast a little closer, a few more miles may be saved, even at the risk of jeopardising the vessel and all on board her.

Meanwhile the sentry has reported eight o'clock, the bell has been struck, the other watch called, and Bob Granville's relief having appeared tardily and unwillingly on the quarter-deck, that young gentleman finds himself at liberty until four o'clock on the following morning, and having rapidly passed on the orders, dives below into the steerage, where sounds of laughter and snatches of song indicate that high festival is held in the midshipman's berth. At the foot of the ladder he nearly tumbles over old Newbould; who has just taken down the late officer of the watch's macintosh, and immediately accosts him with the welcome question, "Have a glass of grog? It's devilish chilly work heaving the log these cold evenings. Why the senior midshipman in the watch should be ordered to do it whilst those youngsters are allowed to skulk about in the sponsons doing nothing, I can't imagine.

The devil seems to have got into the skipper since we sighted that other smoke-jack this morning."

"He's just given orders to keep her away half-a-point, and to shake the reefs out of the topsails, sir," says the old sailor, in a low and mysterious tone. "It ain't for the likes of me to express any opinion," he adds, with a shake of the head; "but I have cruised up the Straits for fifteen years now come February, and one learns a good deal of a sea in that time. I should turn in to-night better pleased if Captain Robson had hauled her up a whole point instead of keeping her away half a one, and had taken the canvas off her altogether until the morning. Depend upon it, sir, short cuts are the longest in the long run, and Cape Bon is pleasanter on the quarter than on the lee bow."

"Why, you old croaker, one would think we were all going to kingdom-come in a bunch. Rouse a bit, and have a tot of grog, that will wash all this nonsense out of your head. I suppose you think that we are all

bound for the devil, because we left Lisbon on a Friday? Absurd."

"It may seem so to you, sir," replied the old sailor gently, "but I *know* that ill-luck attends every ship sailing on that day. Look at us now. We left the Tagus on Friday morning, and before sunset we had run down a Portugee fishing-boat, and drowned all hands aboard of her. It was her own fault I know, but if we had stayed in harbour we shouldn't have been there to do it, that's certain. Then see what happened last Friday. George Anderson, the captain of the fore-castle, as good a sailor as ever walked the deck, fell off the anchor-stock, and was never seen again. You may set me down as a croaker, sir, and laugh at me as much as you like, but I wish that eight bells had struck, and that Saturday morning had arrived."

There was something in the tone of the quartermaster's voice that impressed the midshipman for an instant, but the sound of a rattling chorus issuing from the berth, that

made the very bulkheads shake, dispersed all sense of despondency in a moment. "Come along, Newbould," he cried, and, diving underneath the steerage hammocks, appeared at the berth door. Here the noise was deafening, for some twenty voices, proceeding from as many bodies, cramped up in a confined space that no landsman would have deemed capable of holding them, were shouting out the chorus of a favourite old sea song, with an energy and vigour that spoke volumes in favour of the soundness of their lungs.

"Come, my lads, coal-box again," roared out the senior mate, who, in the self-imposed position of leader of the orchestra, was attempting to keep time in the ranks of his followers by battering on the table with an empty cocked-hat case—"coal-box again."

"The rising gale  
Fills every sail,  
The ship's well mann'd and stored.  
Then sling the flowing bowl!  
Then sling the flowing bowl!



Fond hopes arise,  
The girls we prize  
Shall bless each jovial soul ;  
Then the can, boys, bring,  
We will drink and sing  
Whilst the foaming billows roll."

"Vernon, you young whelp, you're out of tune; take that for not watching my motions;" and the hat-box flew across the table, only to flatten itself against one of the iron knees, for the peccant songster had wisely disappeared beneath the table at the first symptom of the coming missile.

Bob Granville leant against the door until the chorus was over—not a silent watcher, but adding his full quota to the general harmony. When the noise had in a measure died away, he squeezed himself in, and was immediately assailed by a hundred questions all uttered at once by his messmates, few, if any of which needed, or were likely to receive, a reply.

"Hurrah! here's Bob Granville. Come and sing 'Homeward Bound,' we're high



**"THE PECCANT SONGSTER HAD WISELY DISAPPEARED."**



and dry for want of a song. What kind of night is it? How's the wind? How's she heading? What kind of temper is the skipper in? How many knots is she going? Is land in sight?" and a score or more of similar demands, which I shall not encroach upon the reader's patience by quoting.

Bob maintained an imperturbable silence until the Babel of tongues around him had ceased, and then, when he thought his voice could be heard, sung out to the steward for his rum-bottle. This was soon produced by a dingy-looking functionary in dirty white shirt sleeves, and set upon the table before its owner, together with a couple of cracked tumblers, a broken spouted jug containing water, and an old metal tray—from whose battered sides the lacquer had been forcibly removed many a long day before—which held ship's biscuit—or bread, as it is usually called. After pouring out a nip for Newbould, who remained outside the berth, Bob mixed a good stiff jorum for himself, and having taken a long sip, broke silence. "What the

deuce is the use of asking fifty questions at once, I should like to know. How many knots is she going? Why, over twelve, and I wish you'd had to heave the log instead of me. The skipper seems to be shaving the coast pretty close, he has just kept her away more. That's all I know, and anybody wanting further information had better step on deck and find out for themselves. Who's going to sing the next song? Mulgrave, give us 'Sam Hall.'"

"We've had it already," cried half-a-dozen voices; "you sing 'Homeward Bound,' Bob, like a good fellow."

"But we're not homeward bound yet. The song is out of place."

"Damn the odds," cried the senior mate, eager to display his dexterity as leader of the orchestra; "strike up, my lad; and as for you"—to the luckless Vernon—"if you bring discredit on my teaching by caterwauling like the possessed herd of swine, I'll break everyone in your shrivelled-up carcase. Do you hear me, you chowder-headed young yobbucks?"

Seeing that his messmates were bent on hearing the song, Bob Granville, amongst whose other accomplishments a fine baritone voice could be reckoned, having first obtained a lull by hammering the table with the bread-tray, struck up—

HOMeward BOUND.

To old St. Katherine's bid adieu,  
To jovial Sall and jolly Sue ;  
Our anchor's weighed, our sails unfurled,  
We're bound to cross the watery world ;  
    For we are outward bound,  
    For we are outward bound.

The wind it blows from the north-east,  
Our good ship goes ten knots at least ;  
The purser will our wants supply,  
And whilst we've grog we'll ne'er say die ;  
    For we are outward bound,  
    For we are outward bound.

And when we get to Malabar,  
Or to some other coast afar,  
We'll do as we have done before,  
And again set sail for old England's shore ;  
    For we are homeward bound,  
    For we are homeward bound.

Some rich galliot we'll take in tow—  
There are such things as these, you know—  
Then fill each bumper to the brink,  
And like a fish, my lads, let's drink ;  
    For we are homeward bound,  
    For we are homeward bound.

And when we get to the Blackwall docks,  
The girls they come round us in flocks,  
And then unto us they say,  
"You're welcome, Jack, with your four years' pay;  
    For we see you're homeward bound,  
    We see you're homeward bound."

At this stage of the proceedings, the unhappy Vernon, who had employed the shining hours in a way altogether congenial to his taste, by taking surreptitious swigs from Bob's glass under cover of the general uproar and distraction, started from his seat with a yell of anguish, as a ship's biscuit, unerringly aimed by his chief tormentor the senior mate, struck him full on the cheek, even then distended with the filched fluid. Knowing that a close companionship with the culprit would prove highly dangerous, as the leader of the orchestra would employ all

his leisure moments in repeating the late infliction, and very seldom threw with such good aim, notwithstanding the constant practice Vernon afforded him, his neighbours on either side hoisted the lad dexterously on to the top of the table, from whence a heavy roll of the ship shot him out into the steerage through the berth door, followed by the kicks and blows of all whom this abrupt method of departure either incommoded or annoyed. Silence being once more restored, Bob continued his ditty.

And when we get to the Dog and Bell—  
'Tis there good liquor they do sell—  
In comes old Archer with a smile,  
Saying, " Drink, boys, drink, it is worth your  
while ;

For I see you're homeward bound,  
I see you're homeward bound."

But when our money's all gone and spent,  
And there is no more to be borrowed or lent,  
In comes old Archer with a frown,  
Saying, " Jack, get up, let John sit down ;  
For I see he's homeward bound,  
But you are outward bound."



Loud clamorous applause hailed the termination of the midshipman's song, which, let me inform the reader, sings infinitely better than it reads. When written, the many imperfections of style, the baldness of the language, and the general looseness which characterises "Homeward Bound" as a composition, become painfully evident; but when the remarkably pretty, though simple, air to which it is set is trolled forth by a dozen voices in tolerable unison, though profoundly ignorant of thorough bass, and furthermore, when the stage is a small apartment between decks closely packed with high-spirited young men, there is a dash and vigour about the rugged ditty which would not only disarm criticism, but, I venture to think, would hardly fail to carry pleasure with it to the most sensitive ear.

"Bravo, my lads! Well done, Bob!" cries the senior mate in ecstasy. "Come here, you young cub," to the wretched Vernon, who has dried his tears, and is wistfully peeping in at the door. "Come here. Why don't

you ask me for grog if you want it, instead of cribbing it on the sly. Sit down by my side, and I'll allow you to drink out of my tumbler as far down as the pretty," pointing to the slight ornamentation with which the lower part of the glass was surrounded. "Don't say when you get home that I never looked after your welfare, and be d—d to you;" with which unpromising, but in reality kind address, he makes room for the lad by his side, and pushes the grog towards him.

And now, in the lull that follows, the dull thud of the paddle-wheels can be heard as they pursue their endless revolutions, and the straining and creaking of the bulkheads as the *Syren* heels over to the freshening breeze, now amounting almost to a moderate gale.

"Very few hours of this work will bring us to Malta," cries one of the midshipmen.

"The devil take Malta and everything connected with it," says another testily. "I hate the very name of the place."

"That's because you owe Bohadger the

tailor thirty dollars. He'll report you to the skipper as sure as fate, if you don't square up with him."

"And I'll thrash you as sure as fate if he does," retorts the impecunious young officer, and there seems every prospect of a row, when Vernon's protector and castigator throws oil on the troubled waters by singing out—

"Come, come, no fighting here, if you please. Recollect that we are assembled to be jolly, and, moreover, as senior member I won't allow it. Fill up your glasses, boys—it's close on four bells (ten o'clock)—and drink to the girls we left behind at Lisbon, the dark-eyed little beauties. Here's towards them, and God bless them. Merciful heaven, what's that!" for even as the occupants of the berth were raising their glasses to their lips, a sudden crash shook the ship from stem to stern, and a wild cry arose from the two hundred and seventy brave men composing her crew. The *Syren* had run at full speed upon the treacherous Roselle Rock.



## CHAP. II.—THE WRECK.

THE force with which the vessel struck pitched the hanging lamp in the midshipman's berth completely out of its stand, and thus the helplessness of total darkness was added to the horrors of the night. Moved by a natural instinct, each individual strove to reach the deck as soon as possible. For those nearest the two narrow openings that afforded an exit from the berth this was easy enough, but some moments of hard struggling elapsed before such of the lads as were seated on the other side of the table found their way out into the blackness of the steerage, where several of them were miserably bruised by the heavy chests and shot-cases that, escaping from their lashings and racks, were hurled wildly to and fro as the

ill-fated vessel surged beneath the battering waves.

As Bob Granville, who was one of the last to escape, reached the foot of the ladder, the ship gave so heavy a lurch that it seemed almost impossible that she should ever regain an even keel, and a weighty chest secured in the dispensary jumped out of the cleats, and, tearing its way through the frail bulkhead, rushed headlong across to the starboard side of the steerage, from whence arose a piteous cry of agony from a boyish voice, that Bob recognised as belonging to little Vernon.

“Oh, my God! my legs are broken; oh, mother, mother!” wailed the poor lad from out the corner into which the case of drugs had wedged him.

“Hold up, Vernon, I’ll be with you in a moment,” cried Granville, generously relinquishing the opportunity now afforded of escaping from the dangerous steerage. “It will never do to leave the poor little beggar in this dog-hole with broken limbs,” he thought. “I’ll try to get him on deck if the

old craft will only remain quiet for half-a-minute."

Groping his way back in the direction from whence the youngster's voice had proceeded, and narrowly escaping broken bones from shifting obstacles, Bob at length reached the lad, and having with difficulty extricated his crushed form from the corner, lifted it in his strong arms, and again started for the hatchway, down which a gleam of moonlight was now shining, owing to the hood having been washed or torn off.

The *Syren* was still bumping heavily as each sea ground her harder down upon the pitiless rocks, but the lurches she gave were less frequent, and the young man soon gained the hatchway with his helpless messmate in his arms, and commenced to mount the ladder.

"Cheer up, youngster," he said encouragingly; "they must have lowered the quarter boats, and I'll see you placed safely in one of them. They ought to have cleared away the paddle-box boats too by this time. Yes,

they are busy with them now," he added, as his head reached the level of the combings, and he could see imperfectly what transpired on the upper deck.

The scene, as viewed by the fitful gleam that emanated from the moon, across whose watery face dense masses of angry clouds were hurriedly drifted, was weird-like and terrible. On both gangways, and on the paddle-boxes, were groups of active men, some completely clad, others in a state of semi-nudity, working hard to rig the spars and tackles by which the large flat-bottomed boats that at sea formed the coverings to the wheels, were turned over and launched into the water. On the bridge, encouraging these parties, stood the brave captain, who, amid all the horrors of the night, had never once lost his presence of mind. Even above the heavy grinding of the timbers, the dull thump of the battering surges, and the shrill scream of the steam-pipe, his voice was plainly audible, now ordering a tackle to be hooked here, now suggesting the tautening of a

purchase there, and anon thundering out a warning to "hold on," as a sea of greater magnitude than its predecessors foamed on board the wreck, and carried with it to eternity many brave men whose strength was powerless against its sullen might.

Around the mainmast were a number of blue-jackets, busied in the endeavour to reduce the still set canvas; and Bob, glancing aft at the quarter boats, saw that the second cutter was no longer hanging at the davits, but that several men under the command of a lieutenant, amongst whom was old Newbould, were preparing to lower the starboard cutter.

"Now, Vernon, cling on tight to me like a nigger, whilst I carry you across to the first cutter. I'll tell old Newbould to take care of you, and in half no time you'll be safe."

With the utmost difficulty Bob conveyed his wounded messmate to the boat, which was still suspended from the davits, saw him hurriedly placed in the stern-sheets, and then prepared to assist in lowering her. Two



seamen were in the boat with hooks, to prevent her bumping against the side, the lieutenant had the after fall in his hand, and Newbould the foremost. Granville, standing by the former, prepared to take all kinks out of the rope.

“Lower away,” cried the lieutenant, when he perceived a slight lull, and for a few feet the boat descended smoothly on an even keel; but suddenly the foremost fall jammed, and the officer, not aware of this accident, lowered his end roundly, until the boat was in danger of hanging with her stern in the water and her bows upright in the air.

“Avast lowering,” cried out the men in the cutter, but in the confusion and turmoil their voices were totally unheard; the after fall continued to run freely, and in another moment the boat would be hanging perpendicularly by her bows, her inmates pitched into the sea, and all chance of safely launching her would be lost.

“Jam your jacket into the sheave,” roared the bowman to his companion; but the latter

seemed paralysed with terror, and clung wildly to the thwarts, muttering, "O God! O God! we are all lost."

But though the bowman's words had been drowned in the howling of the tempest, their meaning was evident to the other inmate of the boat, the poor little crushed midshipman, who lay writhing with pain in the stern-sheets. His legs were useless, but the active young hands had not yet lost their power, and, heedless of the agony the effort caused him, the lad raised himself a little and attempted to tear off his jacket.

It was in vain. The boat's stern was descending so rapidly that any remedy, to be efficacious, must be applied at once—another couple of seconds, and all would be lost. Could nothing be found to choke the block and check the downward career of the cutter? Yes, one means alone remained, and the wounded boy at once adopted it. Without a moment's hesitation he thrust his delicate little hand between the rope and the shell of the block; the lithe fingers, torn and crushed

into a pulp, were drawn gradually into the swallow; the rope worked slowly and more slowly as the living flesh arrested its progress, and by the time the mutilation had extended to the wrist, the brave boy saw that his sacrifice had not been in vain—the cutter hung safely at the davit.

“They told us at school, I remember, that some old Roman stuck his flipper into the galley fire,” he murmured with a faint smile, and then lost consciousness.

Thinking that the boat had reached the water, the lieutenant was about to cast off the after fall with all expedition, when Bob, who, suspecting that something was wrong, had jumped up on the netting, hastily stopped him, and sliding down into the boat—now on an even keel, owing to the hitch in the foremost fall having been cleared, severed the rope with his knife, and released from its fearful imprisonment the crushed hand of his insensible messmate.

One boat was thus now safely in the water, and lying under the lee of the wreck

her occupants awaited further orders. Eight persons in all were on board her, namely, Lieutenant Constable, Bob Granville, Vernon, the gunner, Newbould the quartermaster, and three seamen. By the direction of the first-named officer the oars were got out, and the cutter was dropped astern, so as to lie under the shelter afforded by the starboard quarter, for unhappily the wind was increasing, and heavy seas came pouring over the vessel, which threatened at every moment to swamp the boat. Scarcely had she vacated her former position than a crash was heard above the conflict of the elements, mingled with a cry of agony that rent the hearts of the listeners. A moment or two revealed the extent of the new catastrophe—the main-mast had fallen over the side, completely smashing the paddle-box boat, and killing or wounding numbers of the men engaged in the task of clearing her away for launching; had the cutter retained her former position she must inevitably have been sunk. Within a few seconds of this accident an enormous

sea struck the *Syren*, when she fell over on her broadside, and the two remaining masts went by the board.

To escape entanglement by the masses of floating cordage, and to avoid any contact with drifting spars, which would have knocked a hole in her bottom, as though it had been made of pasteboard, the cutter had moved a short distance from the wreck, but with the lieutenant at the tiller the remaining six uncrippled men manned the oars, and endeavoured to regain the vessel with the hope of rendering some little assistance, or of picking up as many of the crew as the boat would, with safety, contain. But their most strenuous efforts to approach her were futile. The wind had now risen to a perfect gale from the southward, and although they perseveringly laboured at the oars for more than two hours, they rather increased than diminished the distance between the ship and themselves.

Wearied with the exertions they had undergone, half clothed, wet through, and

supremely wretched, the survivors in the cutter saw that any further attempts to force so heavy a boat against a fierce head wind and sea would only exhaust the little strength they had remaining. Neither did it seem at all probable that now, after the lapse of two hours, their presence could be of much use, for through the darkness a white wall of fleecy foam was every now and then visible, showing that the angry waves were making clean breaches over the unhappy vessel. No human beings could resist these terrific shocks—all shelter was gone, and with the masts and bulwarks must have perished the whole of her fated crew.

Under the directions of Mr. Constable, the cutter's crew had from time to time shouted simultaneously, hoping that their hail would attract the attention of any strong swimmer, and draw him to a haven of at least comparative safety; but no response met their listening ears—nothing but the tumult of the troubled waters and the roaring of the wind.

“It is no further use, my lads,” said the lieutenant, in a tone of deep dejection; “our poor shipmates are all beyond the reach of earthly aid long ere this. I wish I knew a little better the exact part of the coast that we are off, but I have not looked at the chart since noon.”

“I heard the master, sir,” said Bob, “tell the captain at eight o’clock that we were about thirty-five miles from the island of Galita. It was four bells when she struck, and as she was bowling along at more than twelve knots, we ought to be within a few miles of the island now.”

“How would it bear from here?”

“Pretty nigh north, sir,” said Newbould, who was seated on the same thwart with Bob. “I was standing by the companion hatch when the master went below, and heard him say that an island, I don’t know its name, would be on the port beam a little after ten o’clock.”

“Then we must bear up and try to fetch it,” said the lieutenant. “We can do no

further good here, and the gale is increasing in violence every moment. Is the sail in the boat?"

"Yes, sir," said a faint voice from the stern-grating. "I had charge of this boat, and know where to put my hand on everything."

During the long two hours that had elapsed since leaving the ship, poor little Vernon had lain stretched at the bottom of the cutter, suffering the most excruciating agony without a murmur or a groan; in the presence of the awful calamity that had stricken them so suddenly, the misery of the lad had been forgotten by the very people who were indebted to his heroism for the few planks that stood betwixt themselves and eternity.

"Are you in much pain, my poor boy?" asked Mr. Constable kindly.

"Never mind me, sir," replied the lad. "The sail is in the cover, and the halliards and sheets are in a canvas bag in the stern-sheet locker. You can get them without the least trouble."



“Then, Granville, you and Newbould lay in your oars and get up the mast; luckily the wind is favourable for us so far that, if Galita lies in the direction you suppose, by running dead before it we must hit the island. I only hope the wind will not shift until we are safely ashore.”

“I hope not, sir,” said Newbould, who had laid in his oar and was rummaging in the locker for the gear; “but I don’t like the look of that bank of clouds to the nor’ard. I’ve sailed up the Straits now fifteen years come February, and I——”

“Do be quiet with your perpetual croaking,” broke in Bob Granville. “It’s as dark as a wolf’s mouth all round; how can you make out a bank when the whole horizon is as black as ink?”

“Do you remember our conversation, sir, not four hours ago?” returned the old sailor with a sorrowful smile. “You thought me a croaker then; do you think so still?”



### CHAP. III.—IN THE BOAT.

THE mast being stepped and the sail close-reefed, the weary rowers gladly complied with Mr. Constable's directions, and laid in their oars. The cutter was then cautiously allowed to fall off, and when the reduced strip of canvas was hoisted, she shot away from the scene of the disaster with the velocity of an arrow from the bow.

The first moment Granville could spare from his work in the boat was devoted to the relief of poor little Vernon's suffering. Taking off his greatcoat, Bob rolled it up and placed it under the lad's head for a pillow; he then tore into strips the boat's ensign, which he found in the locker, and bandaged up the crushed hand—not very artistically, it is true, for the darkness was

intense, but sufficiently to prevent the salt spray from gaining access to the limb. Most fortunately a barrico of water was in the cutter, and thus the parching thirst from which the patient suffered was allayed, and his general condition, though still one of extreme misery, rendered more endurable.

Thoroughly fagged as he was by the bodily and mental exertion to which he had been so long subjected, the lieutenant refused Bob's offer to relieve him at the oar which performed the duty of a rudder. "No, no," he replied, "you have been pulling hard ever since we left, and the boat wants neat handling, for if she broached-to we should be capsized in a moment."

And indeed it seemed as though the huge curling billows that pursued the little craft could hardly fail to topple over the stern and swallow her up in their yawning gulfs. This was especially the case when the boat sank into the trough between two heavy seas, and partially lost her way owing to the wind ceasing to fill the sail. But Constable was a

skilful boatman, and at any critical moment old Newbould, who was seated aft, put his strong hands on the loom of the steering oar, and assisted the officer to maintain the cutter's bows in the required direction.

Only those who have had the misfortune to be in an open boat during a gale of wind, can form any idea what fearful weather can be successfully withstood if the steersman knows his work, and the crew are calm and ready to obey him. We have instances innumerable of small boats performing voyages of several hundred miles, notably the case of Bligh, who in the *Bounty's* launch traversed an unknown sea in safety, and arrived at Timor, a place distant 3600 nautical miles from the spot where the mutineers turned him adrift. What heavy weather a well-managed boat can live through is evidenced by the cutter belonging to the ill-fated *London*, which for twenty hours successfully battled with an angry sea, and eventually conducted her human freight in safety to the ship that succoured them.

Nearly an hour had elapsed since the cutter left the vicinity of the wreck, and from the speed with which she sailed, half the distance to Galita ought to have been accomplished, supposing that they were correct in their estimated position. The night was very dark, and from the low level of the boat her inmates could only make out a blurred dusky line, when she was lifted on the top of a wave, which they conjectured to be the horizon. Each eye eagerly peered into the gloom in the hope of seeing the mountainous island they sought to reach, but no solid outline rewarded their expectancy, nothing was visible but driving masses of dense black clouds.

For another half-hour they stood on, during which time no land appeared, although the wind seemed in some slight degree to moderate its intensity.

"Go forward, Granville," said the lieutenant; "stand up on the thwart and take a good look round; perhaps your eyes will make out the island. We ought to be





**"BOB REPORTED A BLACK MASS AHEAD."**

within four or five miles of it now, and it crops up pretty high above the water."

Bob complied with the order, and reported a black mass ahead; "whether or not it is the island, sir," he added, "I am unable to say. You go forward and have a look, Newbould."

The quartermaster made his way to the bows, and after gazing into the darkness long and earnestly, came aft and said hurriedly—"That is no island, sir; that is the bank of clouds I told you of. We are going to have a shift of wind. Look up at the sky."

The eyes of all followed in the upward direction indicated by the old sailor, and they observed with surprise that the clouds veiling the moon were travelling in a direction totally opposite to that which they had hitherto pursued, while, even as they looked, it became evident that the wind was lulling—not dying away gradually and fitfully, but stopping with an abnormal abruptness which betokened that some atmospheric change was imminent.



“What does this mean, Newbould?” asked the lieutenant with much anxiety; “are we to have a shift of wind? By Jove! there’s lightning.”

It was true. From out of the black wall, which seemed silently but irresistibly bearing down upon the tempest-tossed castaways, flashes of jagged lightning now gleamed vividly forth, and by the ghastly blue glare thus thrown over the waters, the outline of Galita could be plainly distinguished in the very heart of the advancing storm-cloud. As though by magic, the wind had entirely ceased, and only by the most skilful management could the angry waves be prevented from tumbling on board the cutter.

“Lower the sail,” cried Constable sharply, “and get out the oars. We must give up all hope of reaching Galita now.”

“Yes, sir,” remarked old Newbould, “the wind’s going round sixteen points, and in five minutes we shall be running before a gale from the northward. Fifteen years have I sailed up the Straits come February,

and plenty of curious weather I've seen during that time, but this sudden shift beats all that ever I heard of."

During the ominous lull that prevailed the boat's head was pointed to the southward, and kept in that direction by means of a couple of oars, whilst Bob Granville and two hands manned the halliards, ready to hoist the sail the moment Mr. Constable gave the order; old Newbould stood aft with the sheet in his hand steadfastly regarding the storm-cloud, and from time to time assisting the lieutenant to maintain the boat's head in the desired position.

The hearts of all the castaways were now, if possible, more depressed than ever, for their hopes of shelter had been rudely destroyed by the apparent caprice of the elements that had hitherto favoured their escape. There lay the island, its every outline plainly visible in the streams of lightning that now poured down from the murky heavens. The goal was apparently close at hand, but in reality any attempt to reach it in the face of

the impending hurricane could only result in certain destruction. The sudden stillness that had succeeded the whistling of the wind, in strange contrast to the deep growling of the fast approaching thunder, combined to increase the despondency that overwhelmed them, and made them even hail the first pattering drops of heavy rain with pleasure, as promising a speedy termination to the present unendurable period of inaction.

“Look out, sir!” cried old Newbould; “it will be upon us in a second.”

“Stand by the halliards. Hoist away. Lay in your oars,” sang out the lieutenant, grasping the steering sweep firmly, as the northerly blast came full upon them. In a moment the stout canvas was distended to its utmost limits, and the boat was retracing its steps, with redoubled velocity, in the direction from whence it had lately come.

The situation was terrible in the extreme. Blinding rain—not such as we in England are accustomed to, but sheets of water—drenched the weary men to the skin, and the

cold northerly blast pierced them to the very marrow. Between the flashes of lightning the darkness was intense and awful, whilst, owing to the cross sea, the difficulty in steering the boat was increased tenfold. So terrified were two of the men, that they crouched down beneath the thwarts in the bottom of the boat, and piteously prayed for death to release them from further suffering. Most lucky was it that some of the wrecked men were built of nobler stuff, otherwise the loss of the cutter must have ensued, and the fate of the *Syren* would remain a mystery to the present day.

“We shall pass close by the wreck, sir,” whispered Newbould to the lieutenant as they both grasped the steering oar.

“We can’t help it, for we must go in whatever direction the wind likes to drive us. I only hope we shall keep clear of the rocks, and avoid striking against any floating spars.”

“We are some distance off her still, sir, and I think this rain is too fierce to last

much longer. If it would only clear up, we might see our way a bit."

"Unless the wind moderates sufficiently to permit of our laying-to, we shall be swamped in the surf to a certainty, for at this rate we shall reach the Barbary coast by daylight."

"We have several hours before us, sir, and please God something favourable will turn up between this and then. See, sir, the rain is less violent already."

The quartermaster's remark was perfectly correct, the drenching torrent showed sensible symptoms of diminution, and within half-an-hour the sky had cleared, the stars peeped out, and the moon shone down upon the yeasty waters in silver splendour, lighting up the snowy crests of the waves, and bringing some little comfort to the hearts of the tempest-tossed men—for the wind showed no sign of abatement—who, if hurried forward to destruction, were at all events lighted to their doom by the bright shafts of the Queen of Night.

A vigilant watch was kept on the horizon ahead, for the wreck could not be far distant from the spot they had now reached. Within ten minutes breakers were reported on the starboard bow, and as the cutter hurried onwards, her inmates could plainly distinguish the black outline of the noble vessel that but a few short hours before had been the happy home of nearly three hundred gallant sailors. How many of these were left now? But eight, one of whom was fearfully crippled; and of these few survivors would any remain to tell the tale after the second shipwreck which was manifestly before them? for unless the wind moderated—and of this it showed not the slightest indication—daylight must see them dashed upon the surf-beaten African shore; and even if any of their number escaped the devouring ocean, would not the Arab tribes inhabiting the coast kill the weary and defenceless men without mercy, for the sake of the gold they would suppose them to carry? and even if Fortune, tired of dealing adverse blows, were to guide their

cockle-shell to an uninhabited part of the land, would the lions and other fierce wild beasts permit the wanderers to travel over the many leagues of arid burning sand that separated them from the nearest European settlement?

Such thoughts as these found a place in the breast of even the most resolute amongst the little party, as they mournfully gazed at the stranded vessel, whose dark form was every moment hidden from their sight by the awful seas that swept completely over her, and covered her with a snowy pall that glittered wildly in the moonlight.

When, by the lieutenant's direction, Bob Granville went forward to the bows to keep a vigilant watch for floating spars or other dangers—for Mr. Constable had resolved to pass as near the wreck as safety would permit, hoping against hope that some survivor might be found to whom assistance would still be of use—he kicked with his foot a soft object curled up at the heel of the mast, from which broke forth a piteous moan, and an ejaculation to the Creator for mercy.

“What! is that you, Underhill?” he exclaimed—it was the man who had been so stricken with terror when the boat was lowered—“what the devil are you skulking away there for? Get up this moment, and use your eyes to look out for spars, instead of whimpering like a great school-girl. Rouse out, man; do you hear me?” and, stooping down, he seized the terrified wretch by his collar, and raised him to a sitting position.

From his station in the bows Bob was enabled to watch the wreck, from which they were now distant only a few hundred yards; but his attention was attracted by a low sound of laughter, and, surprised at such ill-timed merriment, he looked hurriedly round and saw that the noise proceeded from Underhill, who, with his back turned towards the boat's bow, was apparently busied with something about the mast. The moonlight flashing on a knife-blade convinced the young man that mischief was brewing, and springing up he pulled the sailor backwards, just as in his mad frenzy he was severing the



halliards which supported the yard. Another moment, and the sail would have been down about their ears, the boat, lost to all control, would have broached-to and been swamped, and the whole party, after having been so many hours preserved, would have perished within a hundred yards of their unhappy shipmates.

With a roar like that of a wild beast the maniac regained his legs, and prepared to fling himself upon Bob Granville, the knife still glittering in his hand, and murder stamped on every lineament of his distorted countenance. But whilst he balanced himself on the thwart prior to darting at his foe, the wreck, which owing to his back having been towards it he had not hitherto perceived, caught the maniac's eye, and distracted his attention. He paused and waved his arms towards his old home.

“Hands about ship, and reef topsails in one,  
It's up the lower rigging the topmen do run,”

he shouted wildly.

“ Ha, ha, old ‘ helm’s-a-lee,’ is that you?” he continued, on remarking Newbould, who was gliding forward with the intention of seizing him. “ Conn your own craft, old ‘ spoke-a-weather.’ I’m going to bathe—to bathe with Captain Robson and his men—hurrah!” and before a hand could be laid upon him the miserable wretch sprang into the sea, and the waters closed for ever over his head. Terror, sheer terror had driven him out of his senses. Had he succeeded in cutting the halliards, every soul in the cutter must have perished with him.





CHAP. IV.—IN THE SURF.

A SILENCE of several minutes' duration followed the tragic event recorded in the last chapter, the first to speak being old Newbould, who said—

“Ah! the poor chap was just cranky with fright. I remember when I first came up the Straits—a matter of fifteen years ago come February—I was captain of the foretop in the *Pantaloon* brig, and when we was cruising in the Levant”——but here his reminiscences were abruptly broken into by Mr. Constable, who desired him to keep a sharp look-out for any stray swimmer, and to reserve his yarn for some more auspicious occasion.

The cutter was dashing past the wreck at racing pace, driven by a gale from the north-

ward, which seemed to increase in intensity at each moment.

“She must break up soon,” said the lieutenant, glancing over the quarter at the wreck—plainly visible in the bright moonlight—over which sheets of solid water were making a clean sweep.

It seemed as though the angry billows were only awaiting his remark to complete the destruction of the vessel, for hardly had the words escaped his lips than a sea of unusual magnitude struck her full on the broadside, and with a tearing of planks, audible amidst the howling of the tempest, the *Syren* was wrenched off the jagged ledge that had hitherto upheld her, and disappeared in the forty fathoms of water that surrounds the dangerous Roselle Rock.

Miserable and wretched as they all were, this distressing scene added yet another pang to the sufferings of the survivors, and the despondency that had been written on every face since the death of Underhill was now visibly deepened. Strangely enough, the

first to venture a cheery remark was little Vernoh, who, stretched on the bottom boards, had never by the slightest complaint given evidence of the pain which every movement of the boat gave to his wounded frame.

“How do you intend to manage with me, Mr. Constable, when we get on shore? I am not in good trim to fight a lion now, but at all events I will undertake to say I won’t run away,” and he glanced down ruefully but semi-comically at his broken limb.

“Oh, we’ll get you along, my lad, somehow; never fear of that. At all events, you may rely on our not deserting you. But we have got to reach the shore first, and I take it that won’t be so easy with the surf that this infernal norther will lash up on the coast. Do you know of any sheltered place in this neighbourhood, Newbould, where we could beach the boat?”

“The whole coast is as open, sir, as the palm of my hand,” replied the quartermaster. “I was in the *Mutine* when Captain Calliper surveyed from the Bay of Tunis to Algiers,

and between Cape Bon and Bona there is not the smallest protection from a northerly gale except under the lee of Galita, and our ill-luck has prevented us from getting there."

All the occupants of the boat were listening with the utmost anxiety to the words that fell from the old sailor, who had a more extensive practical knowledge of the Mediterranean than falls to the lot of most men; and when they heard that the landing must be effected through the midst of a boiling surf, swarming with sharks, their hearts sank deep within them.

"Is the coast inhabited?" continued the lieutenant.

"Only by a few wandering Arab chaps, sir, that live in dirty tents, and would cut your throat for a piastre. I remember in '36, when Jem Styles, as was coxswain to Captain Calliper, landed one day at Bizerta"——

"Never mind the yarn now, Newbould. Tell me about Bizerta. Whereabouts is it?"

Surely I saw it on the chart last night, and somewhere in this neighbourhood.”

“It lies about S.S.E. from Galita, sir. But, bless you, we shan’t do any good by landing there. The few mud huts that form the village are chock-full of thieves and murderers. As I was saying, sir, in ’36, when Jem Styles, as was coxswain to Cap——”

“Is there any harbour there—any shelter for the native boats—a breakwater, jetty, or anything of that kind?” broke in the lieutenant.

“Not a stick or a stone, sir,” replied the old sailor. It doesn’t matter whereabouts on the coast we hit, for the surf will be just as heavy at one part as the other.”

“Well, daylight will be upon us in a short time, and then we shall see our way better.”

The cutter was speeding rapidly onwards, and in a few minutes Bob Granville reported land ahead. Giving the steer-oar to Newbould, Mr. Constable went forward to the bows, and could plainly see the long line of heavy breakers casting themselves with fury

on the sandy beach, their white crests silvery beneath the rays of the moon.

“We must try and lay-to until daylight,” he said, on regaining the stern-sheets; but the heavy sea which broke over the boat the moment an attempt was made to bring her to the wind showed that this course was impracticable, and nothing now remained but to run the gauntlet of the rollers, and to rely on Providence and good seamanship to enable the shipwrecked men to effect a landing.

“Come and help me with the steer-oar, Newbould,” said Mr. Constable, “and you keep a good look-out in the bows, Granville.”

Several minutes must elapse before the cutter reached the outer edge of the surf, a period fraught with intense anxiety to the survivors of the *Syren's* crew. Despite the terrible ordeal through which they were about to pass, there was a wild beauty in the scene which came home to some of them, and added to the excitement of the moment. Before them lay the low coast-line buried in



an unbroken fringe of fleecy surf, behind which the low barren mountain chain running parallel with the sea was visible. Above, the sky was clear of the smallest cloud-fleck, and the cold round moon, and the radiant planets, gazed down on the life-struggle about to commence, with a brilliancy that seemed abnormal to the actors in the tragedy. The wind whistled through the two solitary shrouds that supported the boat's mast, and the dull thud of the breakers on the shore became every instant more audible as the tempest hurried them onward.

And now they are on the outer verge. The lieutenant and quartermaster, grasping the loom of the steering oar with both hands, are standing upright with fixed eyes and compressed lips, gazing at the seething cauldron before them; Bob Granville is sitting on the mast thwart with the halliards in his hand; poor little Vernon, recumbent on the bottom boards, is peering wistfully into the spangled vault above his head; and the remaining survivors are sitting quietly

down with calm but pale faces, awaiting further orders from their commanding officer.

Bob Granville felt a tightening in his chest, similar to the sensation experienced in a swing, as the cutter was swept forward with fearful velocity on the crest of the outermost roller. Smooth as a marble slab was the broad back of that watery wall, but slowly as it rushed onward the advanced guard of the mighty breaker fell forward in a thin streak of foam; broader and broader grew the fleecy ribbon, until with a deafening roar it burst into a snowy field, and at the same moment the cutter struck heavily on the sand.

Bob Granville glanced aft; there stood the officer and his assistant resolutely striving to keep the boat from presenting her side to the breakers, but the struggle is useless. Back sweeps the reflux from the billow, and, catching the bow of the cutter, twists it round helpless as a straw in a mill-race; in surges another roller—angrier, if possible, than its predecessor—in a moment

its resistless volume roars over the devoted boat; the midshipman catches one appealing glance in the eyes of his wounded messmate, and the next instant he is struggling in the midst of the seething waters.

Providentially he was an excellent swimmer, and felt little doubt that he would succeed in reaching the shore, unless battered to death upon the sand. On gaining the surface and dashing the blinding spray from his eyes, the memory of the wounded lad came to his brain, and muttering, "I can't see the poor little devil drowned without stretching out a hand to help him," Bob struck out for the swamped boat, to which two human beings were clinging, in one of whom he recognised Vernon.

Before reaching the cutter another surf poured over the young man, submerging him for so prolonged a period, that all the breath was out of his body by the time he arose to the surface. He found himself able to touch the sandy bottom with his feet, but any attempt to retain that position after the roller

had burst, was frustrated by the violence of the undertow, which, striking him full on the chest, as though the liquid element were the bough of a tree, a rope, or other elastic substance, seemed to crush the very life out of his body, and made him grasp the gunwale of the cutter with satisfaction. Here he found Newbould supporting little Vernon, who was barely sensible.

“Where are the others?” he asked, as he edged himself along until his mouth was close to the quartermaster’s ear, for the roar of the surf drowned all attempts at ordinary conversation.

“They have struck out for the shore, but Lord save us, sir, the poor chaps will never reach it unless the Almighty works a miracle on their behalf. I saw Mr. Constable rolled over and over like a ninepin, although he had the steer-oar under his arms as a support.”

“Then what had we better do?”

“Stick to the boat, sir—that is our only chance. Daylight is breaking now, and

perhaps some of those Arab chaps will see us and lend us a hand. I wish we could lift this poor young gentleman into the cutter, for I shall hardly be able to hold him up much longer."

By their united efforts this was accomplished, and the wounded lad placed on a thwart, where, though drenched by each roller, he was in a less painful position.

Although the heavy surf swept over her, the swamped boat, from some unknown cause, was carried no further inland, and hope was not altogether abandoned by Bob and Newbould. Meanwhile, the first grey streaks heralding the dawn had been succeeded by a roseate flush, and soon the coast was plainly visible. As the boat was lifted on the bosom of a wave, the quartermaster scanned the shore eagerly and exclaimed—"There is a man on horseback, sir. Climb into the boat and wave your jacket. Never mind if she does sink an inch or two lower. Quick, sir; tumble in; it is our only chance."

Comprehending the necessity of prompt action, Granville at once complied with the old sailor's advice, and was soon balancing himself on a thwart, waving his torn shirt with the utmost energy. A sea hurled him against the sharp stern, inflicting bruises, severe but unfelt in the excitement of the moment; in a few seconds, however, he had regained his position, and to his unspeakable satisfaction saw that he had succeeded in attracting the attention of the solitary horseman. After staring in astonishment for a minute, the latter waved his long lance in answer, and, wheeling his horse suddenly round, galloped off in the direction of the mountains.

"Well done, sir," cried Newbould, when Bob communicated to him the good news. "We shall do now. That chap has gone off to get assistance—whether to cut our throats or to help us, the Lord only knows," he muttered to himself in a lower tone. "Come out of the boat, sir," he added, "she is not able to bear you both."

Bob rose to comply, but at that moment a surf swept over them and dashed his head violently against the iron clamp of the mast; a pale green substance, full of an awful gurgling horror, seemed to swim before his eyes and encompass his burning brain; then, unconsciousness supervening, all became a blank.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the foot of a low sandy range of hills, covered with scanty brushwood, by the side of a well beneath the shade of a cluster of date palms, stood an Arab tent of larger dimensions than usual, the spear planted in the ground before the entrance denoting that its owner was a man of rank amongst the sons of the desert. Several horses were picketed around other smaller tents, and by the side of the well sat a man in a strange costume, half Arab, half man-of-war's man. An exclamation in a low sweet voice roused this being from the brown study into which he had fallen, and rising hastily from the ground he ran towards the door of the large

tent, where stood a girl of some sixteen summers, eagerly beckoning him forward. The interior of the movable habitation was occupied by two couches or divans, on each of which was stretched a human form. The girl pointed to one of these figures, a youth who was staring about with wistful and wondering eyes, which lighted up with joy and recognition at seeing the man in the nondescript attire.

“Where am I, Newbould?” said a weak voice in English.

“In the Sheikh’s tent, sir, and Heaven be praised that you have come to your senses.”

“How were we saved, and where are the others?”

“Mr. Vernon lies near you, sir. The others have lost the number of their mess.” And the old sailor sighed.

But the girl, advancing with her fingers on her lips, told Newbould that he must answer no more questions. The patient had also observed it, but broke in eagerly—



“ Answer me this, who is that angel whose form I have seen in my dreams for—oh! it seems years?”

“ She is the Sheikh’s daughter, sir, and to her care you owe your life,” was the quarter-master’s reply, as at a peremptory gesture from the maiden he quitted the tent.





CHAP. V.—THE ABBÉ.

**B**OOTH time and scene now change, and I must ask the reader to accompany me to Messina, fair city of fairest Sicily, on a July morning in the year 1810, and to picture to himself the town rising from the shore in the form of an amphitheatre, the eastern sun lighting up the snow-white houses with a dazzling radiance, and throwing into bold relief the dark mountains in the background, which rise gradually in the rear of the city, their sombre sides clothed with citrons, oranges, and olives. Looking to the southwest, the towering cone of mighty Etna is seen, belted below its snowy mantle by a wide strip of black lava, ashes, and scorix, which lower down its sides give place to a luxuriant forest region, home of the oak, the

beech, the poplar; and interspersed with patches of rich pasture land, whereon graze placidly the herds of the peasantry, whose fields and vineyards surround the base of the huge volcano.

But grand and imposing as is the mountain and its surroundings, for beauty it must yield the palm to the seaward view. Standing on an eminence, the beholder sees lying beneath him the purple highlands of classic Italy; the thin blue streak that separates it from Sicily; and the city of Messina, crowned with its lofty churches, from whose steeples the bells are heard sending their mingled peal over the whole harbour, beyond the slowly curling swirl that marks Charybdis—dreaded of ancient mariners, onward yet, in that still atmosphere, until the sound reaches the fishermen, whose boats lie idly, with flapping sail, in the calm strait; nor is the faint harmony unheard amidst his mountains by the swarthy Calabrian bandit, who, murderer though he be, drops reverently on bended knee, with head uncovered, and murmurs a

prayer to that Great Being against whose precepts his life is one long offence.

Fair indeed is Messina on that July morning, but fairer still is the lovely maiden who, leaning over the lava balustrade that terminates her father's garden, surveys the scene I have endeavoured to describe. That she is a daughter of Italy, is apparent by the dark lustrous eyes and clear olive complexion, through which the tender peach blossom becomes visible, when, as now, some emotion possesses her; that she is young, her lithe, well-poised figure, budding into womanhood, clearly indicates; and that she is impatiently awaiting some one, is evident from the constant tapping of her little foot, and the half-petulant words that from time to time escape from her rosebud lips.

“When will he rest quietly at home, and not depart on these secret journeys, each one of which fills me with an undefined terror?” she murmurs, her eyes fixed upon the white lateen sail of a boat, becalmed midway between the mainland and Sicily. “What

his object is he refuses to tell me, and Giacomo turns a deaf ear when I question him; yet I feel sure there must be danger, or he would never disguise himself, and take such precautions to prevent his absence being known. Grant, Holy Mother, that he may be shielded from all harm," she adds, dropping on her knees, and fervently kissing the crucifix suspended by a coral chain thrown round her neck, as the clash of bells from the cathedral tower reminds her of her devotions; but in less than a moment her mood changes—she is but fourteen, reader—and, starting up, she stamps her foot impatiently, saying, "The wind, the wind—where is the wind, now it is wanted? Ten minutes of an easterly breeze would bring them to the shore. Why does not that lazy Giacomo get out his oars, when he knows how anxiously I am awaiting——"

She stopped abruptly, for a hand was laid gently upon her shoulder, and a soft voice said, "Why is my daughter not at her devotions on this holy day? Is she expecting

any one, that she absents herself from matins?"

The rich colour mantled in the girl's cheek at the insinuation, and an angry reply rose to her lips as she faced her questioner, but the retort was suppressed, and she replied humbly—

"I passed an unquiet night, father, and felt unequal to going abroad."

"Perhaps my daughter will be sufficiently recovered to attend vespers," said the priest, gazing into her face, as though he would read every thought passing through her mind.

"I hope so," faltered the girl, "if my father is well enough to accompany me."

"Is the Marquis ill, then?" asked the Abbé in the same low, sweet voice, but with an anxiety he was unable to repress apparent in his tone, and his keen eyes bent enquiringly on hers.

She blushed deeply as she answered, "Yes, father, he is much indisposed; so greatly, that he is unable to quit his chamber."

“Then I must postpone my visit for some more favourable occasion,” said the priest, still narrowly scrutinising the girl.

“Thank you, father; I will tell him,” she replied, in a tone that betrayed to her wily interrogator the relief that this decision afforded her.

“Commend me to him, my daughter, and farewell,” said the Abbé, as with noiseless footstep he turned away, and took the little path leading downward to the town.

“So, so,” he murmured to himself, “my young penitent has taken to lying, has she? But you are far too ingenuous, my fair cousin, to deceive me. What can her object be? That my uncle is neither ill, nor even in the villa, I know well enough; so what can be the meaning of this mystery? And what took her to the terrace? She is too young to have a lover; yet still she must have had some object. She was murmuring against the calm when I accosted her, so whatever or whoever she is expecting must be coming by sea. I will go down to the







BIANCA ON THE TERRACE.

harbour and look around. Ah! my rich uncle," he continued, his brow contracting, and his pace unconsciously quickening, "you and yours may have driven me into the priesthood, but the tonsure is powerless to exorcise ambition. Could I but bring these broad acres"—and he paused to glance around him—"to Mother Church, what bounds are there to the elevation I might attain?—a bishopric—the red hat—nay, even the triple crown itself might encircle my brow. And only this girl Bianca between me and so glorious a future! We shall see—shall see;" and, wrapped in his thoughts, the Abbé di Salini threaded his way through the populace, until he gained the harbour.

The girl remained upon the terrace, watching the retreating form of her cousin until it was hidden from her view, and endeavouring to shake off the despondency into which his visit had plunged her. Conscious that she would have found difficulty in accounting for the secret aversion and

dread with which her priestly relation always inspired her, Bianca set herself resolutely to the task of recalling the numberless little kindnesses shown her by the Abbé. Looking backwards to her earliest childhood, she could remember Edgardo di Salini, not the austere churchman ready to reprove the slightest failing he now was, but a handsome, generous youth, ever sparkling with mirth and gaiety. Some faint recollection of a scene which followed shortly after the death of her uncle, the Conte di Salini, of which she had been an unintentional witness, still lingered in her breast, and she could recall the indignant protests and wild utterances of the young man when the Archbishop informed him, in her father's presence, that his deceased parent had left his property to the Church, together with his dying injunction that his only son, Edgardo, should embrace a religious calling. After this her cousin had quitted Messina for Rome, and for several years she only heard of him through the letters he occasionally wrote to her father, in

which he professed himself not only reconciled to, but happy in, his new career, and looked forward to the time when his superiors would permit him to return to his native island; affectionate messages to the little Bianca always concluded these epistles. At length, a year before the July morning of which we are speaking, Edgardo, now the Abbé di Salini, arrived at Messina, but how changed from the light-hearted lad of Bianca's childhood! Sombre, grave, and prematurely old, no trace remained of the kind cousin who had taken the girl for hours on his shoulder, and moved her to admiring laughter by his boyish pranks. All happiness seemed absent from that careworn face, pale with study and vigil, and only the irrepressible flashing of the deep-set eyes occasionally revealed the ardent spirit, crushed and checked by the cold discipline of the Church of Rome. His visits to her father's house were frequent, perhaps more so than was quite welcome to the Marquis, whose views were far in advance of those held by his countrymen in general,

and who looked with little favour on the authority the Italian priesthood arrogated to themselves. He knew, however, that it would be highly dangerous to display this, so always received his nephew with good grace, though the latter could never gain the ascendancy over his mind that he so much desired.

Once indeed there had been a rupture between the relatives, almost ending in the Abbé's exclusion from the villa, which arose in this manner. Edgardo had taken upon himself the office of religious instructor and confessor to his young cousin, probably with the hope of gaining that influence over the daughter to which her father had shown no disposition to submit. In this capacity he pourtrayed in glowing language to the girl the delights of a religious life, secluded from the turmoils and temptations of the world, and secure of eternal happiness when death should close her earthly career. It must not be imagined that he entered upon the subject abruptly; such a course would have repelled

the bird, and frightened it from the lure beyond power of recall; but by pleasing anecdote, and well-selected reading, he brought the subject before his pupil's mind in so insidious a shape, that nine girls out of ten in Bianca's position would have fallen headlong into the snare, and professed a desire to retire to a convent; a desire which no parent—however disinclined to such a measure—would have dared to oppose, against the overwhelming power then possessed by the Church.

But Bianca had two safeguards which had never entered into her wily relative's calculations; first, her deep devotion to her father, which prompted her to pour into his listening ear every thought that passed through her mind; and secondly, an undefined dread and mistrust of her cousin, which neutralised the poison he was slowly dropping into her breast. How and from whence this aversion arose, the girl was quite unable to tell, and often strove to chase it from her mind; but it was in vain; some secret feeling within

warned her that Edgardo was only playing a part, and though she listened to his advice and admonitions with an outward respect and reverence which completely deceived him, keen-sighted though he was, the fear with which she inwardly regarded him made her shrink from his counsels, if only from the knowledge that they proceeded from him.

One evening, when the Marquis, after dinner, was sitting on the verandah, smoking a cigar, and playing with the curly locks of Bianca, who was seated at his feet, he asked her how she was progressing under the spiritual direction of her cousin, little anticipating the reply so simple a question would draw forth.

“Very well indeed, *papa mio*; but I wish the Abbé” — she never spoke of him as Edgardo; all cousinly familiarity had departed long since — “would leave off singing the praises of a convent life, for I never intend to profess. You would hardly wish to see your little daughter dressed in an ugly black frock, would you, *babbo*? And fancy if

they made a queer little bare spot in the nuns' heads, as they do in the priests'!" she continued, all the exuberant gaiety of her disposition breaking forth unchecked. "Should not I look funny with my head shaved, eh, papa?"

"Does Edgardo persuade you to become a nun?" asked the Marquis, in as quiet a tone as the passion within him would permit.

"Of course he does, *babbo mio*; though I pay very little attention to him. But never mind the Abbé now; let us be happy whilst we are cosy together;" and the girl nestled yet closer to her father, before starting the conversation on a more congenial topic.

The next morning, when Di Salini entered the villa, he was met by a servant, who informed him that his uncle wished to speak to him in his own apartment. What then took place was never clearly known to the outer world, but the domestics heard their master's voice raised in angry tones, and the Abbé strode forth from the interview paler



than usual, and entirely forgetful of his assumed humility of gait.

“Where can the Abbé be to-day?” asked Bianca, coming to seek the Marquis, when the usual hour of his visit had long past. “Have you seen him, father?”

“You can put away your books for the day, my child,” replied the father with a grim smile; “and tell Giacomo to get the boat ready. We will take a cruise round the Lipari Islands.”

“Oh, delightful!” cried the girl, clapping her hands, and rushing to the door, only to reappear the moment afterwards with clouded countenance, and the question, “Is the Abbé coming with us, *babbo*?”

“No, no, child, of course not. It is to be a holiday for you. Run away and warn Giacomo. I don’t think my pious nephew will show his nose here for some time to come,” he continued to himself, as he heard Bianca flying, light as a bird, along the corridors; but in this opinion the Marquis erred, for hardly had the words passed his lips than

the *major-domo* entered, and informed him that the individual in question was even now in the hall, and requested a few minutes' conversation with him.

"Show him in, Niccolo," he said with a sigh. "What can the fellow want now, I wonder? I told him my mind pretty freely two hours ago. Perhaps he is going to threaten me with the Pope?"

But Edgardo, who had now entered the room, convinced him by his first words that his mission was a peaceful one. Walking humbly to the Marquis with bent head, he said in a submissive tone, "My uncle, forgive me. I was wrong, and have added to my transgression by losing my temper."

Like most hasty people, the Marquis's passionate outbursts were soon over, and he afterwards often felt deep regret at the lengths to which his temper had led him. He was also a generous, forgiving man, open-hearted to a fault, so he cut his nephew's apologies short by jumping up and seizing him by the hand.

“Don't let us quarrel, lad,” he cried. “Your father was my brother, and his son and I should never disagree. Think no more about what has passed, but in future keep convent talk for your other penitents.”

“No word upon the subject shall ever pass my lips,” he replied in the low tone habitual to him, “though the saints bear me witness that what I did-I thought was for the best.”

“We disagree so widely on the whole subject, that it is useless to discuss it. I cannot think that God ever intended a bright young creature like Bianca to be shut up all her life between four bare walls, nor can I ever believe that such a sacrifice would bring her one inch nearer to heaven. But enough of it, Edgardo. We are going round the Liparis in the yacht; come with us, and we shall make a regular family party.”

“Nay, my uncle, that were impossible,” replied the priest, shaking his head; “many hours and days, ay weeks, of fasting and prayer must be mine ere I can hope that

the sin I this morning committed can be blotted out on high. Farewell, uncle, until your return, when I shall, with your permission, continue my visits to Bianca as usual."

"Of course, of course," said the Marquis, touched at the humble tone adopted by his nephew. "Come as often as you can. My house is always yours, Edgardo."

The Abbé left the villa, his gait and demeanour even more submissive than usual; but any curious eye, watching him closely, would have been surprised to see the change that came over his whole figure when the thick foliage of the shrubbery hid him from the inmates of the house. Flinging down the open breviary, upon which his eyes had hitherto been intently fixed, he cast himself upon the mossy turf beside the neglected book, and groaned aloud at the remembrance of the humiliating ordeal he had just undergone.

"O God!" he moaned, "that I should be forced thus to humble myself before so dull an idiot as my uncle, who has no finer quality

about him than his good-nature and brute strength. And the web that I had so carefully extended is crept through by the little she-devil Bianca, as though it had no existence. What will the fathers at Rome think of me when I report, as I must, the complete failure of my enterprise? They can never be brought to understand the thousand difficulties that environ an undertaking of this nature, when the material to work upon is so unpromising. Were my uncle only like most of his infatuated and foolish countrymen, much might be achieved by working on his superstition; but our best weapons splinter like matchwood against the armour of his gross incredulity. Or did he treat Bianca like any other reasonable man, and keep the little chit in the nursery, we could have provided her with a *gouvernatrice*, who would have prepared the ground for the reception of the good seed. But now all has failed—totally and lamentably failed. Yet who could have thought that while she was listening with seeming respect, nay, almost with plea-

sure, to the good advice I gave her—for it was good, and meant for her future salvation,” he reiterated to himself, in the vain hope of quieting the conscience even then reproaching his Jesuitical sophistry—“who would have thought that she was slyly treasuring up every word to repeat it to her *babbo*? But I will be revenged,” he continued, his despondency giving place to rage, “revenged on her, and on her *babbo* too. I will watch his every movement by day and by night. The authorities already suspect him to be in league with the new secret society that has sprung into existence, and could this but be clearly proved, his exile, perhaps his death—who knows in these stormy times?—is certain; and the *babbo* gone, it will be a small difficulty to get rid of his brat.”

Faithful to this design, and masking his unholy treachery beneath a redoubled austerity of demeanour, the Abbé had placed spies about the house, who soon ascertained that the Marquis was in the habit of

absenting himself on certain occasions, though to what place he repaired was not quite so clear. These periodical disappearances were known to Bianca, though she was strictly enjoined not to mention them to any human being; hence her alarm when her cousin suddenly appeared and asked for his uncle, whom she momentarily expected back from one of these mysterious journeys; in fact his boat was visible, becalmed in the strait.

While endeavouring — though with but indifferent success — to root up her prejudices against the Abbé, Bianca saw the surface of the water ruffled by a breeze, and in a few minutes, the boat's sail filling, she glided swiftly towards the harbour.

“Here he comes at last,” she murmured joyfully; so now I must hurry into the house, and see that his coffee and roll are ready;” and thus saying, she quitted the terrace.





CHAP. VI.—THE DISGUISED FISHERMAN.

**ON** reaching the harbour, the Abbé di Salini found the quays crowded with fisherwomen, waiting with empty baskets the arrival of their husbands' boats, containing the capture of the previous night. Very quaint and picturesque looked these fishwives in their sturdy boots, short petticoats, and white coifs, from beneath which glistened huge earrings, eclipsed in brightness by the eyes that flashed forth brilliantly, as their owners gesticulated and screamed in tones whose shrillness and energy would have led a stranger to imagine that some desperate quarrel was taking place; but the Abbé knew that these vociferations, alarming as they sounded, were perfectly harmless, and passed quietly through the excited women,



whose voices died away as if by magic when he appeared, only to be raised afresh with redoubled vigour when he was lost to view.

Breviary in hand, the young man wandered along the quay, apparently immersed in religious contemplation; but beneath the bent brows and shovel hat shot forth keen and inquiring glances, which took in everything, animate or inanimate, that came within their observation. The breeze was momentarily freshening, and the light fishing boats skimmed over the smooth surface of the strait at a speed that soon brought the foremost round the mole, and into the inner harbour. Leaning against, and half-concealed by, an anchor-stock, the Abbé scrutinised each little vessel as she rounded the pier-head, and, lowering her sails, shot up, by the impetus she had acquired, into her place beside the stairs, there to discharge her freight.

The occupants of most of the boats were known to him as men who made their living on the sea, commonplace, ordinary fishermen,

steeped in superstition to their eyebrows, as the queer little charms, dangling on their bare sunburned chests, sufficiently attested. With such people the Marquis di Stromboli was little likely to associate, and as boat after boat glided in, the good Abbé began to suspect that he was on the wrong scent, and had lost his breakfast without any compensating result. Inwardly vexed, he shut his book, gathered up the skirts of his black robe to avoid contact with the fish baskets, and was about to retrace his steps homeward, when the creaking of a block, the loud flapping of canvas, and the tones of a familiar voice, caused him to step back behind the shelter of the anchor-stock, where, with shovel hat pulled forward over his face, he stood motionless, peering into the boat now passing beneath him.

She was of considerably larger size than the fishing craft that had preceded her, measuring some ten tons, and having the three short masts, carrying long lateen sails, which constitute the "felucca" rig. Four

men were on board her; one steering and shouting out directions, whom the Abbé recognised as Giacomo Marsigli, Bianca's foster-brother; the others busied about the ropes with which the vessel would be moored.

The position occupied by the priest was admirably adapted to his purpose of seeing without being seen, for the boat passed so close to the pier-head that nothing on board her could escape his observation, whilst it was highly improbable that any of her occupants would look upwards; and even if they did, there was little chance of his being recognised, for in Messina an ecclesiastic was far from a novelty, and the long cassock and looped-up hat rendered one holy father remarkably like all the rest of his brethren.

"So, so," he muttered, "there is Master Giacomo, to whom I owe a grudge which I trust to repay ere long; Pietro, the fisherman; and Cesare, the swineherd, who seems to have given up his hogs for a sea life; but who is the fourth? I know all my uncle's

people well enough, yet I never saw one with a long black beard before. Something in the fellow's figure seems familiar to me too. Why doesn't he lift up his head, and give me a good view of his features;" and in his eagerness the Abbé leaned forward, just as, by some mischance, Giacomo glanced upwards, and for one instant the eyes of the two men met.

"*Maladizione,*" thought the priest, "how unlucky! and my hat was pushed back too. Perhaps he didn't recognise me, as he failed to salute; if so, so much the better. But I must follow the felucca at any risk, and find out who the fourth man is. *Ha, il diavolo adosso* (the devil is in him), if I cannot manage to get a nearer peep at his face."

Thus saying, the Abbé hurried along the quay with as much speed as the decorum due to his sacred calling would permit, his eyes fixed on the unknown fisherman, who, with bent head, was coiling down a rope, and showing nothing of his features but the beard streaming over his chest. Fortune,

however, favoured the churchman, or perhaps it would be more just to attribute his good luck to the Prince of Darkness, whose agency he had just invoked; for Cesare, the swineherd, who was securing the foresail with more energy than dexterity, being, so to speak, rather out of his element when afloat, jerked the canvas clumsily against the face of the stooping figure, when, for a moment, the black beard was pushed aside, and the astonished spy recognised, with a thrill of indescribable joy, the face of his uncle, the Marquis di Stromboli. His object was attained, so, striking off immediately at right angles from the quay, he soon became involved in the streets of the city, where he could ponder undisturbed over the strange discovery he had made.

“Now at last I hold one end of the clue,” he thought triumphantly, “and it will be strange if, with the means at my command, I am not soon in possession of the entire secret. And so your dear *babbo* was ill, was he, my sweet little cousin? And you had

passed a restless night, eh? I don't wonder, indeed, at your feeling anxious whilst your beloved parent is masquerading about the coast in a dress half-fisherman, half-bandit, and wholly idiotic. But it shall be my care, my sweet child, to relieve you of all uneasiness on the score of your papa's whereabouts before many months have elapsed. And this was the reason why he kept Giacomo at home, and would not let him start in the spring with the other coral boats. The mystery therefore is of some months' standing. And what can this mystery be?" he muttered half aloud. "Most likely something political—some revolutionary plot, to discover which would secure me the favour of either Murat or the Bourbons. There is a rumour of some secret society which holds its meetings in the lonely Calabrian forests, usually frequented by none but brigands, disbanded soldiers, and charcoal-burners. Can my uncle be mixed up with these *Carbonari*, as I hear the members of the society term themselves? It is very probable, for he

is a thorough democrat despite his birth, and would join in any movement likely to erect a Republic on the shattered fragments of a kingdom. In any case, the discovery I have made must be of service, if only as affording me a hold over a man who has refused hitherto to bestow upon me—his nephew and only male representative—the slightest mark of confidence.”

Hunger now warned the scheming priest that he had not yet broken his fast, a fact of which excitement had rendered him hitherto totally oblivious; and finding himself, at this stage of his reverie, within a few doors of his dwelling, he went in, and discussed his coffee and toast with the placid content of a man whose conscience is approving him for the performance of some meritorious deed. Here we will leave him, whilst we return to the harbour and the occupants of the felucca.

The moment the little vessel was secured alongside the quay, the crew handed out the fish—a sorry take when compared with the other boats—to the wives of Pietro and

Cesare, who were in readiness to receive them. One basket, seemingly heavier than the rest, but in reality light, owing to its false bottom, was hoisted upon the shoulders of the disguised nobleman by Giacomo, who whispered to his master, "Wait for me at the cottage, *Eccellenza*; I have something for your private ear."

The black-bearded fisherman nodded, and, stooping low beneath his burden, followed in the footsteps of Pietro's wife, who led the way along the beach, towards the north, until they reached a few scattered cottages, chiefly inhabited by fishermen, that stood immediately outside the town; the beach in front affording a clear space for drying and repairing nets, and the garden plot in the rear furnishing the thrifty Sicilian housewives with the vegetables and pot-herbs that helped to diversify the daily meal of fish—for only on rare occasions did meat enter into the bill of fare of these poor people.

Into one of these, rather larger than its neighbours, the woman led the way, and



after depositing her own burden, and carefully shutting the door, hastened to relieve the Marquis of his basket, from which she removed the few fish that concealed the false bottom, and, opening the lid, drew forth a small wallet, containing the every-day clothes of her master. Provided with these, the nobleman retired into a small apartment, and presently emerged, the black beard gone, the dark stain removed from his face and hands, and presenting the appearance of a tall, well-made, and remarkably handsome gentleman, some fifty years of age.

“Look out of the door, Jessa,” he said, “and see if Giacomo is coming. I am longing to reach the villa, both to see my daughter and to get something to eat.”

“Here he is, *Eccellenza*,” replied the woman; and even as she spoke Marsigli entered, and was immediately greeted by the Marquis with, “Well, Giacomo, you forget Bianca is awaiting me, and that I am famishing. What is this important matter that will not keep until the evening?”

“ I can tell your Excellency as we climb the hill,” replied the young man.

“ Then come along. *Addio*, Jessa ;” and he led the way out of the back door, across the garden, and so by a wicket into a small and scarcely perceptible footpath, that, winding up the hill, ascended to the grounds of the villa.

“ Now then, Giacomo, out with this new secret,” he cried, when they had left the cottage some hundred yards behind them.

“ It must be something very important, for you look as grave as though you were diving, and a shark was keeping watch between you and the surface.”

“ It is of importance, and it was necessary that you should know it without an hour’s delay,” replied the young man in the tone of familiarity that his intimacy with Bianca permitted him to adopt, when no third person was by, towards a master whose confidant and attendant he was, and who looked upon him rather in the light of a son than a servant. “ The Abbé di Salini was on the

pier-head just now when we came in; and, what is of far greater consequence, he recognised you."

"Impossible, through my disguise! What makes you think so, Giacomo?"

"Because that *porco* Cesare knocked your beard aside whilst your nephew was watching the felucca with straining eyes, and I saw the gleam of joy that passed over his countenance on making the discovery."

The Marquis's face became clouded on receipt of this intelligence, and he murmured, "This is awkward, Giacomo, very awkward."

"Not nearly as awkward as though he had been unobserved himself," replied the young man. "Now you are forewarned, and can adopt a thousand devices to throw him off the scent, should he attempt to follow it up. You are too kind, Excellency," he added, after a short pause, "and trust him too much about the villa. Bianca detests him; and he is always spying about to see what harm he can find out. These Jesuits are all the same,



"THIS IS AWKWARD, GIACOMO."



not one to be trusted half as far as you can see him. It was only a week ago that I heard him attempting to pump old Niccolo about your indispositions, as he calls them. Why can he not mind his own business, and attend to his priestly duties in the town?"

"You dislike him, and are prejudiced, Giacomo. Remember he is the only male relative I have left."

"And your only enemy to boot," replied the young man hotly.

"What leads you to suppose that?"


"Nothing. I know it, that's all."

The Marquis smiled. "Your reasoning is hardly sound, my lad. But here we are at the gate. I will think over what you have told me, which you must keep secret even from Bianca, whom I see running down to meet us."

With a cry of joy the girl embraced first her father, then her foster-brother; and whilst the latter returned to the felucca, the Marquis and his daughter, hand-in-hand, entered the villa.



CHAP. VII.—A CONSPIRATOR.

“H, *babbo mio*, I have been so frightened!” was the girl’s first exclamation on reaching the dining-room, “so frightened! Whilst I was watching your boat from the terrace, the Abbé joined me, stole up so quietly that I had no suspicion of his presence until a hand was laid on my shoulder, and asked me for whom I was waiting.”

“This is too impertinent,” thought the Marquis, to whose face a shade of anxiety had come on hearing his nephew’s name. “I must give Edgardo to understand that I will not have a child like Bianca questioned in this cavalier fashion. And what did you answer, *cara mia?*” he asked, in as unconcerned a tone as he could assume.

“I said I was expecting no one, but had passed an unquiet night, so could not attend matins; which was perfectly true, for I am always restless and uneasy when you are absent on these mysterious excursions. I was obliged to tell him you were again indisposed,” she continued, blushing at the remembrance of the falsehood; “and oh, *babbo!* he looked into my face with his great black eyes, as though he saw into my very heart, and could tell that the words I uttered were untrue. When, oh! when, father, will you cease these secret expeditions, which always fill me with an indescribable terror? Whenever you are away, my cousin seems to divine it, and hovers about the villa all day long; at least it seems so to me, but perhaps anxiety makes me over suspicious.”

“Has he ever questioned you on any previous occasion?”

“No, never; but the last time you went he asked old Niccolo what was the matter with you; how long you had been ill; and



even made some remarks on the regularity with which your attacks presented themselves. He suspects something, *babbo*—of that I feel certain.”

“Well, never mind him now, my child. Give me some breakfast, for I am half-starved, and don't worry your pretty little head about Edgardo. He is, after all, my nephew, and probably it is only affection that prompts him to make inquiries concerning my health. You must not betray any suspicions, *figlia mia*, or real harm may come of it. Now tell me all that you have been doing during my absence.”

When his daughter had left, the Marquis pondered deeply on the intelligence she had given him, which, coming so directly after Giacomo's warning, almost convinced him, disinclined though he was to entertain an ill opinion of his nephew, that the latter had some deeper object than mere courtesy in the persistent observation he maintained on the villa and its inmates. Left fatherless at an early age, Lorenzo di Stella, Marquis di

Stromboli, had, while still a youth, become intimately associated with some of the more advanced in thought amongst his countrymen, who, having watched the blood-stained progress of the French Revolution from its first commencement, craved for some measure of this supposititious liberty for the kingdom of Naples, then groaning under the unholy yoke of the tyrannical Bourbon, Ferdinand the Fourth, and burdened with the presence of an arrogant and avaricious priesthood, in whose nostrils the very name of freedom held an unsavoury odour. By the advanced party with whom Di Stella allied himself the clergy were held in abhorrence, as a more insuperable barrier against liberty than either king, courtiers, or nobles. This dislike, which the Marquis shared in common with his associates, became intensified on witnessing the devices to which the priests resorted to obtain the property of his only brother, Paolo di Stella, Conte di Salini—the father of Edgardo. How successful they were we have already seen. By working on

the superstitious fears of a mind at no time remarkable for its strength, and plastic as clay when a protracted illness had enfeebled the frame containing it, the priests gained possession, despite Lorenzo's strenuous opposition, not only of the rich Salini estates, inherited by the Conte from his mother, but also of the son, whom his father's dying injunction compelled to enter their ranks.

Their rapacity on this occasion so incensed the Marquis, that from that hour he plunged headlong into the sea of liberalism, and became more or less connected with the various secret societies called into existence by the universal discontent prevailing against the Government, and fostered by the example shown by France to awe-stricken Europe. Perhaps the loss of his young wife, which happened at Bianca's birth, also contributed to bring about this result, the widower thinking that constant action would divert his mind from the memory of her he had loved so deeply and lost so soon.

It can hardly be supposed that the Govern-

ment were ignorant of the various schemes for their subversion to which the Marquis lent his name and influence, and yet, beyond sundry hints received from time to time, the conspirator lived unmolested. This was due to the priests, who, having an eye on the Stromboli property, which they hoped to gain possession of through Edgardo, easily persuaded the ministers that it was rather an advantage for them than otherwise to have a man of substance, on whom they could lay hands at any moment, at the head of the intriguers. The wily churchmen knew that property forfeited by treason reverted, not to Church, but to Crown; and until they saw some way to acquiring it themselves, took every care that it should remain unmolested.

It will be seen that only one life, Bianca's, stood between them and the Stromboli estates, for Edgardo must inherit as next of kin, and any property acquired by him belonged to the order of which he was a member. This he himself was perfectly aware of, and had long since discovered for

what reason he had been compelled to assume holy orders ; but these secret springs were not revealed to the young man until after the fathers at Rome convinced themselves that he had the making of a true priest about him, and was entitled to their utmost confidence.

Edgardo di Salini early showed that he was of sterner mould than his weak-minded parent, and after the first regrets at leaving the world were past, his keen intellect had recognised the necessity of succumbing to the inevitable ; and looking far into time, he had seen the future that might be his, by associating himself heart and soul with the order to which he belonged. He did so, and in place of a pressed man the college found themselves possessed of an enthusiastic recruit, ready to enter into any design having for its object the furtherance of the society. If the ground of the heart shows any disposition to receive Jesuit seed, the sower will promptly appear, and the fathers, observing the young man's keen desire for actual

employment, shortened the term of his probation, conferred upon him the title of Abbé, and sent him forth to Messina, there to keep a constant watch over the uncle whose lands he hoped to inherit. That he was playing the ignoble part of a spy; that he was introducing himself between father and daughter, to rob the latter of her heritage; that he was repaying kindness with the basest ingratitude, and behaving as a scheming villain,—all this and more the young Abbé knew perfectly well; but was it not for the aggrandisement of his order? and—which perhaps was even of greater consequence—would it not lead to the aggrandisement of himself?

Since the birth of Bianca di Stella in 1797, the Marquis had witnessed many stirring events taking place around him. He had seen the tricolour waving over Naples, and the establishment of the Parthenopean Republic in that city; had watched its ephemeral existence and ultimate downfall; the re-establishment of the tyrant Ferdinand by Nelson, and his flight to Sicily, when, early

in 1806, the French again took possession of Naples, and Napoleon placed his brother Joseph on the throne; had seen the English victorious at Maida, the abdication of Joseph, and the accession of Joachim Murat—the brave and the unfortunate *sabreur*. Important events these to any inhabitant of the Two Sicilies, but doubly so to Di Stromboli, who pulled many of the wires controlling affairs of state. Ferdinand had taken refuge in Sicily, and was calling down curses on the head of gay Murat, reigning comfortably at Naples, and governing with a moderation and prudence that won him golden opinions.

“Could none of the liberty which their countrymen on the mainland enjoyed be participated in by their brother islanders?” thought the party to whom the Marquis belonged. “Would it not be possible to drive Ferdinand, with his priests, his dungeons, and his instruments of torture, back to Spain, and deliver over Sicily to the monarch who was ruling so wisely on the opposite shore?”

They knew not if it were possible, but they knew it could be attempted ; and it was for the organisation of this scheme that the Marquis di Stromboli so frequently left Messina disguised in the garb of a fisherman.

Hitherto his conspiracies and plottings had all been known to Government, who, looking on them as of little consequence, had been contented with frustrating them, without punishing their designer. Had Ferdinand known the part he was taking now, it would have gone harder with him ; but an organisation had recently sprung into existence which completely baffled the Bourbon, his ministers, and the priests—this was the Carbonari, amongst whom Lorenzo di Stromboli was the chief.

How and when this society arose seems buried in obscurity, though its members claimed descent from Francis of France, first of the name. This was, of course, fabulous, the legend concerning that monarch abounding with anachronisms and geographical errors, so gross as to reduce its credibility to



vanishing point ; but leaving its origin out of the question, the fact remains that, at the date of which I now write—1810—Carbonarism had become a power in Southern Italy, numbering amongst its members men in every station of life.

The wild recesses of the Calabrian mountains were the principal resort of the brotherhood, and thither from time to time it was necessary for the Marquis to repair, for the purpose of presiding over the *Vendita*, or Lodge, of which he was Grand Master. To accomplish this without awaking the suspicions of the Bourbonists was a matter of extreme difficulty, but had hitherto been successfully managed by means of the felucca and the disguise mentioned in the last chapter.

Fortunately the Marquis was the owner of several boats called "corallines," feluccas of small burden, taking their name from the service in which they are employed, that of coral-fishing. Every spring these little vessels left Messina for the African coast,

where they remained during the summer months, their crews engaged in the laborious, and often perilous, occupation of diving for the beautiful pink and red coral with which that portion of the Mediterranean abounds. The method of capturing it is simple. Each boat is manned by seven or eight men, all good divers; and a *padrone*, or head-man. The fishing apparatus is in the form of a large cross, made of heavy wood and weighted, the limbs of the cross being all of equal length, and furnished at their extremities with sack-like masses of strong netting. This cumbrous machine is slung so that the arms extend horizontally when it reaches the bottom, the sacks of netting hanging on the ground. When lowered, two divers accompany it, who sweep the arms rapidly over the rocks on which the coral is growing, when it becomes entangled in the net, and is found sticking in its meshes on the cross being drawn up.

From his astonishing powers in the art of diving, Giacomo Marsigli had acquired a

reputation throughout the Sicilian coast, and wondrous legends are to this day bandied about amongst the fishermen of the seemingly superhuman length of time he could remain beneath the surface of the water.

“Were a second Marsigli to be born, we should find the enchanted coral tree growing off Torre del Greco, whose limbs, ample as the oak’s, are invisible to all but the diver who has remained under water two minutes. But our fishers now are poor *diavoli*, whom a minute and a-half at the bottom would drown.” This is language held even now by credulous and greedy *padrones*, who fully believe in the existence of such a tree, and sigh for the wealth its capture would procure them.

Giacomo’s skill being thus well known, it was matter for surprise amongst the sea-side population of Messina, when, in the spring, the corallines belonging to the Marquis sailed without their best diver; but the declining health of Caterina, Giacomo’s mother and Bianca di Stella’s nurse, was alleged as the

reason of her son's remaining behind, and was readily received by all, except the Abbé. Ever suspicious, and ready to attribute each action of those around him to self-interest, the priest remained incredulous; but the regularity with which Giacomo went and returned from his fishing excursions in the strait had completely deceived him, until the unlucky morning when Cesare's awkwardness discovered the Marquis on board the felucca.

Every month a meeting of the leaders amongst the Carbonari took place in their Grand Lodge in the Calabrian mountains, under the presidency of their Grand Master, the Marquis; and on these occasions he made use of the felucca—all of whose small crew were members of the society—to land him at an unfrequented spot on the coast, and await his return, which was frequently delayed by urgent business until late in the following day, or even longer. During these periodical absences the household supposed him confined to his room, where no one was

admitted but Bianca and old Niccolo, the *maggior-domo*, himself a Carbonaro.

Surrounded as the revolutionary chieftain was by faithful adherents, his comings and goings had hitherto excited no suspicions amongst the Bourbonists, owing to the clever precautions adopted by Giacomo Marsigli. The position held by this young man would appear anomalous to us, but was in truth far from uncommon amongst the Italians, who erect a less rigid barrier between the various classes of society than ourselves.

When the Marchesa died, her motherless little infant was at once taken to the loving bosom of Caterina Marsigli, then bewailing the loss of her own babe. Giacomo was at that time a lad of nine years old, and the children grew up together in all the intimacy of brother and sister, contracting an affection for each other that neither time nor difference of rank could lessen. Until his own inclination caused the boy to embrace the calling of a coral-fisher, they had never been separated, and even now, though Bianca was fourteen,

her happiest moments were those when her foster-brother could stroll with her amongst the mountains, telling her stories of strange fishes, of submarine forests, and the ever-welcome legend of the enchanted coral tree. Giacomo rewarded his young mistress with a spaniel-like devotion that knew no bounds, yet into which love, other than that of an elder brother to a younger sister, never entered. It is difficult for us to understand the relationship existing between these young people, but, as I mentioned above, such cases are frequent in Italy.





CHAP. VIII.—WITH THE CARBONARI.

THE month of July wore away without producing any event worthy of record. The Marquis remained at his villa, Giacomo went on his usual fishing excursions in the felucca, and the Abbé continued to instruct his young cousin, taking especial care, however, to leave the word “convent” out of his religious discourses.

Despite his utmost vigilance, the latter had been unable to discover anything definite regarding the object of his uncle’s movements, and was looking forward to the time when, according to his calculations, the Marquis would again steal forth in disguise. In readiness for this event he had hired a small fishing-boat, manned by two creatures of his own, in which he hoped, without exciting

suspicion, to follow the felucca, and solve the mystery. This boat was kept moored near the coralline, on which the priest's men were enjoined to keep constant watch, and to let their master know immediately should a fisherman with a black beard proceed on board her.

About the middle of August the Abbé was told that the felucca was putting to sea with the individual in question; when, hurrying down, himself in a fisherman's garb, he caused his boat to preserve such a distance from his uncle's, that he could observe her through a powerful telescope, without exciting any suspicion. He watched her stretch to the southward, then haul to the wind, and stand into a little bay on the opposite coast. This was quite enough for the present; to venture further would be dangerous; so, after a pretence of fishing, the priest returned to Messina.

The following day he saw the coralline return, when the black-bearded fisherman again shouldered his basket and followed



Jessa, who was kept in view by a spy of the Abbé's, told off for the purpose. This man watched them enter Pietro's cottage, and thus the place where the Marquis assumed his disguise became known to his nephew.

A week afterwards the Abbé went quietly in his boat to the bay into which he had seen the felucca enter. It was a wild and wholly deserted spot, not even the smoke from a swineherd's cottage curling up above the tangled forest. The priest landed and examined the beach minutely, walking knee-deep in the water, for the tideless Mediterranean would have left his footsteps on the sand. The utmost caution must be observed in an enterprise of this nature.

At the head of the inlet he discovered numerous traces which assured him he had found the spot where the Marquis disembarked; the sand was trampled, the marks of the boat's prow when she was hauled up on the beach could be seen; and further inland, sheltered from view by the thick brushwood, lay the ashes of a fire, together with fish



**EDGARDO DI SALINI EXPLORING.**



bones, and other remnants of a frugal meal. Closer investigation revealed a narrow hidden path, leading the Abbé knew not whither.

With the shrewdness which he undeniably possessed, Edgardo put all these signs and indications together, and arrived at a conclusion in every way gratifying to himself.

“So this is the snug little creek my worthy uncle has selected to land in,” he thought; “here, the place where the felucca is stranded; there, the fire beside which her crew sleep; and beyond again, the concealed path by which the Marquis gains the mountains. All this is clear as daylight, and the course I must adopt is equally apparent. I now know that he leaves Messina every four weeks, and as it is essential that I should ascertain his object in coming here, I must conceal myself near the path a day or two before the appointed time, watch him land, and trust to my good luck and the chapter of accidents for what follows. I will take Guisepe with me, who is a powerful, determined fellow,

and so superstitious that I need never fear his revealing anything I forbid him. The waiting will be tedious, and the enterprise will be accompanied by some little hardship, but that is *una cosa che non è degna di notare*. Now for Messina, and patience."

Some three weeks after the visit made to the mainland by the Abbé, the felucca again left Messina, and, observing the same tactics as on the previous occasion, entered the little bay, and ran ashore on the soft sand at its head. Giacomo jumped out, and extended his hand to assist the Marquis, now clad in his usual garments, who rapidly descended, and, telling his follower to abide his return as usual, disappeared by the small hidden path before mentioned. Left alone with Pietro and Cesare, Giacomo re-entered the boat, and assisted his companions in securing the sails, and preparing for the night's encampment. By the time this was accomplished half-an-hour had passed, when the young man went to the fore-hatch, and, quietly opening it, called out—

“Come up now; there is no further need for concealment,” when, to the intense astonishment of his brother fishermen, four people, of whose presence they had no suspicion, emerged from the confined recess, and, jumping down upon the sand, commenced stretching their cramped limbs.

“Treachery!” “*Perfidia!*” cried both the men, drawing their long knives; but at a Carbonari sign from Giacomo, repeated by the strangers, the weapons dropped by their sides, when he continued—

“Yes, *perfidia* there certainly is, but not amongst we seven, who are all Good Cousins. But let us hurry on, my friends; and do you, Pietro and Cesare, remain by the boat;” thus saying, he sprang ashore, and, followed by the four new-comers, disappeared in the pathway which the Marquis had previously taken.

Within the deepest recess of a gloomy forest, amidst whose huge trunks matted undergrowth rendered progress difficult, if not impossible—situated in a dismal hollow,

seeming yet more cheerless in the rapidly-approaching darkness in which we now view it, stood a large oblong building, constructed of wood, and somewhat resembling a barn—this was the *Vendita*, or Grand Lodge of the Carbonari. Through the chinks in the wall gleams of light were visible, and a group of men could be distinguished in the open space before the entrance, all armed but two, who were bound, and, from the jealous way their companions guarded them, were evidently prisoners. Suddenly the door was flung open, emitting a broad stream of light that fell upon the captives, two men in the garb of fishers, and a deep voice called forth from the interior of the building, "Bring hither the *spioni* (spies);" when the culprits were hurried in by their guards, the double door closed, and all was silent save the footfall of sentinels posted at various stations round the lodge.

Let us enter with the prisoners into this mysterious abode.

The interior of the *Vendita* was devoid of

all furniture except a double line of benches without backs, which occupied the lower portion of the chamber, having a passage between them as in churches, by which access could be gained to the upper end; and on these were seated, silent and motionless, the Good Cousins, as the members of the society are denominated.

At the upper end of the room, which was paved throughout with red brick, stood three large blocks of wood, each supported by three legs, at which were seated three personages—clad in flowing white garbs, and holding axes in their hands—the chief of whom was the Marquis di Stromboli. On the block before which, as Grand Master Elect, he was seated, were placed a linen cloth, salt, water, a crucifix, leaves, fire, earth, and other symbols, all having some reference to the secret objects of the society.

As the guard surrounding the prisoners marched them up before their judges, an ominous murmur ran through the ranks of the Good Cousins, whose hands sought their



daggers, while the word *traditori* (traitors) passed from lip to lip; but when, at a gesture from the Grand Elect, the escort halted some five paces distant from his seat, a deadly silence reigned throughout the large apartment, appalling enough to an innocent man, but terrible indeed to the two spies, who, glancing around them, saw little hope of mercy in the stern looks of hatred bent upon them by a hundred cruel eyes.

The silence lasted some five minutes—though it seemed fifty; then the Grand Elect slowly rose, and spoke as follows:—

“Prisoners, you have been apprehended in the act of endeavouring to penetrate the secrets of this most honourable *vendita* of Good Cousins; yet ere we speak the word which condemns you to a slow and lingering death, let us in justice make sure that you are guilty of the great crime laid to your charge. How say ye, Good Cousins; shall we examine the witnesses before passing judgment?”

“Let them appear,” was echoed from the

benches at the lower end of the apartment, when immediately the door opened, and Giacomo Marsigli, in company with the four strangers he had concealed in the felucca, entered the hall, and advancing to the Grand Elect's block, made humble reverence before him. The witnesses then, withdrawing a little to the right, stood motionless and silent, until it should please him to question them.

Another short pause ensued, trying in the extreme to the nerves of the accused men, one of whom, the roughest in appearance, almost grovelled on the earth in abject terror, regardless of the whispered exhortations of his companion in misfortune, a handsome young man with the priestly tonsure, the symmetry of whose graceful form the coarse garb he wore rather heightened than decreased. At length the Grand Master spoke.

“Good Cousin Marsigli, take the customary oath of this most honourable Society, and then say what thou knowest concerning these men before me.”

Giacomo, after bowing lowly, advanced to the block before which the Marquis was seated, and, placing his hand reverently on each of the symbols as he named them, took the required oath as follows:—

“I swear by this crucifix, whereon our dear Lord was martyred (kissing it); by this block, emblem of Heaven and the roundness of the sphere; by the limpid water which cleanses from sin; by the fire which lights us to our higher duties; by the salt, typical of Christianity; by the thread, commemorating the Mother of God who spun it; by the principles of liberty that animate this holy society; by this and these I swear to speak the truth, and nothing but the truth, concerning the *spioni* here present.”

“Proceed,” said the Grand Master solemnly.

“The younger of the accused,” continued Giacomo, “is Edgardo, Conte and Abbé di Salini; his companion, an obscure fisherman, by name Guiseppe Lombrico. Circumstances into which it is now needless to enter caused

me to suspect di Salini, and vigilant watching converted my suspicions into a certainty. I found out that the younger prisoner had hired a boat, into which he entered in the disguise he now wears; and by this means he discovered the bay wherein certain of our Sicilian Good Cousins are in the habit of landing. This place he explored, as he imagined without a witness, but I was concealed near the spot, and observed his every motion. Yesterday he returned to the bay in company with Lombrico, when both men, carefully hidden, awaited the coming of the Good Cousins before mentioned, of whom I was one. But happily I had foreseen the course they would adopt, and, communicating with the branch *vendita* at Etna, I obtained the services of the four Good Cousins here with me, whom I concealed in our boat, unknown to my companions. Everything turned out as I had anticipated. The two *spioni* followed the footsteps of a Good Cousin proceeding to this Grand Lodge, and we in turn followed them, wishing to gain

certain evidence of their guilt before arresting them ; and not until they had crept up to the very walls of the *vendita*, and were looking through the cracks in the wooden building, did we advance and take them prisoners. My companions here can corroborate me, if the culprits deny, or further evidence is needed."

"We can," cried the four witnesses, who had hitherto spoken no word.

"What say you, prisoners, to this charge?" said the Grand Master ; "is it true or false?"

"It is true," answered the Abbé in firm tones, though the pallor of his countenance showed the emotion under which he was labouring—"all true. Cease this wretched mummery, *tio mio* (uncle), and let us depart. We will swear not to reveal aught that we have seen."

To the latter portion of this speech the Grand Master gave no heed, but, addressing his companions seated at the blocks on either side, said—

"Honourable Orator and Worshipful Sec-

retary, ye have heard the admission of these men, that they were endeavouring to penetrate the mysteries of our most holy *vendita*; of what punishment think ye them deserving?"

"Of the death decreed by our laws in all such cases—crucifixion," returned the two assistant judges in solemn tones.

A shriek, followed by a heavy fall, rang through the building at the awful word "crucifixion;" it arose from Guiseppe Lombrico, who lost consciousness through terror; his companion, firmer of nerve, remained erect and motionless. Again the Grand Master spoke.

"Good Cousins in this Grand *Vendita* here assembled, ye have heard the admission made by the men; of what punishment think ye them deserving?"

"*Un delitto capitale, la morte, crocifissione* (capital punishment, death, crucifixion)," yelled the assembled members, rising from their seats in intense excitement, and shaking their unsheathed daggers at the culprits.

By a motion the Grand Master stilled the clamour; then he spoke.

“Prisoners, make your peace with God, and pray to Him for a speedy release from the torments of the cross.”

The words were uttered slowly and solemnly, so that each syllable went home to the heart of the younger culprit, whose companion remained unconscious, and at their conclusion the Orator arose from before his block and said—

“It is well and justly decreed. Good Cousin Avengers, fulfil your duties.”

As he ceased, certain of the brotherhood quitted their seats and left the lodge, to return in a few minutes carrying two crosses, whose stained limbs showed the horrid use to which they had already been put. These fearful instruments were laid upon the ground near the prisoners, who were immediately seized by the strong arms of the “Avengers,” and bound to the crosses by ropes provided from two small recesses, laid open by removing the bricks of the floor,

and destined to receive the feet of the crosses when the victims were attached; from the same hiding-place hammers and nails were drawn forth.

Any doubt as to the terrible earnestness of the tragedy about to be enacted had passed away from the Abbé's mind on the appearance of the blood-stained crosses, and on seeing the methodical manner in which the Avengers performed each detail of a duty, evidently not now undertaken for the first time. Bitter regrets rose within his breast, and a great fear, to which he had hitherto been a stranger, bereft him of all power of resistance, when thrown upon the instrument of torture; even speech deserted him, his tongue refused its office, and he could only cast appealing glances at the uncle and judge he had sought to betray, who, seated calmly before the mystic block, surveyed unmoved the dreadful scene that was taking place before him.

Both prisoners were now firmly bound to the crosses, and two Avengers held the



fingers of the Abbé's right hand extended, whilst the third placed the point of a nail upon the open palm, and raised the hammer aloft to strike it. The moment was awful, and the wretched intriguer involuntarily closed his eyes to shut out the view of the descending instrument which would drive the sharp spike through bone and flesh.

O God! the horror of that moment! Could nothing relieve him from this ignominious and agonising death?

Yes. As the heavy hammer swung aloft, and the culprit's bound limbs shrank in fear, the tones of the Grand Master echoed through the building, as, in a voice of thunder, he shouted the order, "Hold!"

The Avenger bearing the hammer let it gently sink to the earth, and the Marquis proceeded—

"Prisoners, there is one means by which you may escape the dreadful death to which your judges have sentenced you—one alternative which the Society will in mercy permit you to adopt. This is affiliation,

whereby you will become a member, perhaps a trusty one, of the Order you sought to betray. Speak quickly, for our time is short."

"I accept with gratitude, both for myself and for my miserable companion," cried Di Salini, in whose breast a faint spark of hope was now kindled.

"Good Cousin Avengers, proceed with the rite of initiation for those electing to join us rather than undergo the penalty of death."

Almost before the Grand Master's words were ended, the Abbé's eyes were firmly bandaged by a silk handkerchief, and he felt the cross, on which he still remained extended, lifted into a perpendicular position. Here he hung for several minutes, when the bandage was removed, and he found himself facing the Grand Master, and surrounded by the members of the Society, whose drawn weapons were placed within an inch of his body. His accomplice he could see in a similar position.

With every faculty on the alert, now that

the dread of immediate death was removed, Di Salini, despite the pain caused by his fastenings, listened to the address of the Grand Master, setting forth the purposes of the Society, and the objects it had in view. This concluded, each of the neophytes was pricked three times on the right arm, seven times on the left, and three times over the heart, under the left breast, by the daggers of the Good Cousins surrounding the crosses, the blood flowing freely from the wounds, and accounting probably for the sanguine stains borne by the instruments of torture.

After this, the new Good Cousins were freed, and summoned before the central block to pronounce the fearful oath which bound them irrevocably to the Order. Kneeling amidst the members, who assumed the same posture, their swords and daggers pointed at the breasts of the blood-stained neophytes, the latter repeated after the Marquis the following formula :—

“ I, Edgardo di Salini (Guiseppe Lom-

brico), a free citizen of Ausonia, swear before the Grand Master of the Universe, and the Grand Elect Good Cousin, to devote my whole future life to the advancement of the three great principles of liberty, equality, and progress, which are the essence and inner being of all acts of Carbonarism, both public and private. I promise to fight to the death, if it prove impossible otherwise to restore the reign of liberty; and I consent, should I prove a traitor or false to this my voluntary oath, to be slain without mercy by my Good Cousins; to be fastened to a cross in a *vendita*, stripped of my clothing, and crowned with thorns; and afterwards to have my body torn open, and my entrails and traitorous heart taken out, and scattered to the winds of heaven. May this and worse befall me, both in this world and in the next, if I prove not true to the Society. I also swear, under pain of the aforesaid penalties, to obey all orders I may receive from my superiors in the Society, executing the same blindly and unquestioningly, even though

directed against those nearest to me in the outer world."

A few minor ceremonies concluded the act of initiation, after which the Good Cousins proceeded to political business, into which we need not follow them.





CHAP. IX.—THE ALGERINE GALLEY.

THE year 1810 had closed without leading the members of the Carbonari to suspect that the Bourbonists had any suspicion of the blow they meditated, which was fixed for the 16th February, 1811. It was past midnight on the last day in January, and the Marquis di Stromboli was preparing to retire to rest, when a low rap sounded at his door, and old Niccolo the *maggior-domo* entered, pale with anxiety, and, approaching his master, said to him in a hollow tone—

“All is discovered, *Eccellenza*. Your nephew has betrayed us, and the *sbirri* will be here before daylight. You must fly without a moment's delay.”

“Who brought this intelligence, Niccolo?” asked the astonished nobleman.

“Giacomo Marsigli, *Eccellenza*. He has gone down to prepare the felucca. Hasten, dear master, hasten. Your valise is here ready packed, and this bag of gold will last you for several months in Spain. Fly down to the felucca, *Eccellenza*, and I will follow with the young lady. No one in the house will have the least suspicion when you are gone.”

“Well, be it so, Niccolò,” returned the Marquis, who saw the urgency of the case, and was examining the pistols which always hung by his bedside, “be it so. Tell Bianca to take only the most necessary articles of clothing, and to follow me immediately;” and placing the weapons in his belt, the Marquis seized the small portmanteau, and silently quitted the house, descending to Pietro’s cottage by the narrow path we have seen him follow on a previous occasion, in company with Giacomo Marsigli. This latter was awaiting him at the garden wicket, and immediately asked, “Where is Bianca?”

“She is to follow with Niccolo. But is there such a desperate hurry, Giacomo?”

“Every moment’s delay is fraught with danger. The Abbé has betrayed us. Why did I not put my knife between his traitorous ribs when I found him listening at the wall of the *vendita*?” groaned the young man. “But happily the felucca is ready, manned by seven of our best hands, and if only Bianca will hasten, we shall be out of sight of land before daylight.

Very few minutes elapsed before the girl appeared, escorted by old Niccolo, who carried the few things her hasty flight would permit of.

“Quick into the boat,” cried Giacomo. “Addio, Niccolo;” and seizing his foster-sister, the impetuous young man hurried her out to the beach before the cottage, and placed her in the small skiff that was to convey them to the felucca. The Marquis quickly followed, and Giacomo was in the act of shoving off, when a human form appeared, running at full speed, and, as the



boat left the shore, flung himself into her, crying, "Take me with you, *Eccellenza*. I must come."

Giacomo, furious at the detention, had drawn his knife, but withheld his thrust on recognising the voice to belong to Guiseppe Lombrico.

"Take an oar," he said; and the boat flew over the water, propelled by the strong arms of the two rowers. In a few minutes the felucca was reached, the skiff hauled on board, the anchor weighed, the sail noiselessly hoisted, and the little vessel stood to the southward, propelled by the favourable northerly breeze then blowing.

"And what may have brought you to join us, Guiseppe?" asked Marsigli, when the felucca was fairly clear of the harbour, and all present anxiety at an end. "You are not a traitor too, I hope."

"No, Giacomo," answered the man quietly; "this is the last place I should select were I a *traditore*. There is little of the traitor about me except what is on this

knife;" and, drawing the weapon, he showed it to his companion, who remarked that the blade was covered with a dull red substance.

"You killed him, then?" asked Marsigli, returning the knife with the utmost composure.

"As I would a dog," replied Lombrico. "But what will the Marquis say?"

"That it serves the traitorous hound right, I should think," said Giacomo. "But he need not know it for the present at all events. Wash your knife, and hold your tongue; we will not add to his misery by telling him his nephew's fate."

When a number of *sbirri* surrounded the Villa di Stromboli on the following morning, they found the nest still warm, but the birds were flown, whither they could not ascertain, for the domestics, with the exception of old Niccolo, were as ignorant as themselves. Further inquiry revealed the absence of the Marquis's finest coralline, but whether he and his daughter had sailed in her or not was at the best doubtful; and pursuit was

useless, for the authorities had no vessel at their disposal, and it was impossible to divine in what direction the fugitives had steered.

Meanwhile the favouring northerly breeze carried the felucca rapidly to the southward, and by ten o'clock on the following morning the bearings of snow-clad Etna indicated that Cape Passero, the southern extremity of Sicily, lay on their starboard beam, so the little vessel was brought nearer to the wind, and stood westward for Port Mahon. Besides the Marquis and his daughter and Giacomo, there were eight sturdy fishermen on board the boat, all well armed, and all so compromised in the Carbonari plot that they were resolved to fight to the death rather than submit to capture. Their great dread was lest they should fall in with one of the many British cruisers with which the Mediterranean was swarming, for the English were favourable to the Bourbon cause, and would have handed them over to Ferdinand, when their fate was certain death. But

fortune befriended them, and they slipped past the hostile vessels unnoticed or unheeded, and on the evening of the fourth day were within fifty miles of the island of Minorca.

Night fell, and with the darkness the breeze died away, so that the felucca lost steerage way, and lay idly becalmed on the smooth sea. The little after-cabin had been given up entirely to Bianca, whilst her father and the crew slept on deck, no great hardship even in February. Midnight came, and all hands were buried in slumber, except the man at the now useless helm, when the latter, after listening attentively, quitted his post, and, crawling forward to where Giacomo Marsigli lay sleeping, shook him gently by the shoulder.

“What is the matter, Guiseppo? Is a breeze springing up?”

“No, but come aft quietly and listen. I think I hear the dip of oars.”

“Of oars!” returned the young *padrone*, all thought of sleep banished at the intelli-

gence. "The Holy Virgin shield us from the Algerines. What would be Bianca's fate if those inhuman devils captured us?"

Whilst thus speaking he had reached the decked stern, and, laying themselves down at full length, both men strained their hearing faculties to the utmost extent. The felucca rolled to and fro as she rose and fell lazily on the long swell, her clinker-built sides sending forth little ribbons of phosphoric light, when the sharp edges of the planks disturbed the water in her motion; the gear creaked as the heavy yards swung from side to side; but no other sound was audible, and Giacomo was almost hoping that Lombrico's alarm had been a false one, when the latter touched his shoulder, and whispered, "Listen now, *padrone*."

Yes, there could be no doubt that the man was right; above the little noises in the felucca arose the dull faint splash caused by many heavy sweeps (oars) rising and falling in monotonous unison; and gazing earnestly in the direction from whence the ominous

sound proceeded, Giacomo detected the phosphorescent gleam, as the advancing vessel churned the foam beneath her bows in her onward progress.

“*Beata Vergine,*” groaned the *padrone*, “it is an accursed galley, and steering straight for us. We are lost, unless the saints intervene in our behalf. Wake the men one by one, Guiseppe, and bid them prepare their arms in silence; I will call the Marquis. *Santa Maria*, what have we done to deserve this, the worse blow that fortune could inflict?” he murmured, making his way to his sleeping master, whom he woke from dreams of beautiful Sicily to impart to him the miserable prospect before them.

“Is there no chance of escape? May these miscreants not pass us in the dark?” asked the Marquis.

“They may, but it is very unlikely. The slave who first sights a vessel receives a reward; and they are on the look-out for plunder, otherwise they would never be rowing hard at this hour of the night.”

“Well, Giacomo, one thing always remains for us—to fight. If discovered, we must resist to the last man. Arm the crew whilst I awake Bianca. Alas! my unhappy darling, was it for this that you became the companion of my flight?” and the miserable father entered his daughter’s cabin.

Under the directions of Giacomo Marsigli, the sails were noiselessly lowered, and the men, their weapons by their sides, crouched beneath the gunwale of the coralline in the deepest silence. More and more distinct became the sound of oars as the galley neared them, and soon the felucca’s crew could hear the crack of the whips on the naked shoulders of the slaves, mingled with the lamentations and curses of these unhappy beings, as their drivers by repeated blows urged them to renewed exertions.

Onward came the Algerine, steering in a direction that would bring her within a hundred yards of the felucca, and still, owing to the precautions adopted by Giacomo, the latter remained unobserved. Everything



CAPTURED BY A PIRATE.





depended on the next few minutes, for, did the galley once pass them, there was little fear of discovery. With straining eyes and beating hearts, the Italians gazed on the huge bulk of the pirate, hope gaining the better of despair, as each dip of the sweeps urged her on her way.

And now she is abreast of the coralline, and no alteration in her course indicates that the fugitives have been seen—now her black form is two hundred yards beyond them, and the Marquis clasps Bianca to his bosom as he tells her to allay her fears, for the danger is past.

Vain hope! for suddenly through the darkness ascended a yell as though from the mouth of hell, as with shouts, imprecations, curses, and blasphemies in every known tongue the rowers redouble their exertions, and the galley swings slowly round, preparatory to bearing down upon her prey.

Yes, they are discovered, and at a moment when the risk seemed least imminent. The keen eye of a suffering captive had perceived

the little vessel, and, hopeful of some alleviation to his misery, he had pointed her out to the pirates.

“We must resist, my men,” cried the Marquis, “must resist to the last; and if we fail to beat off the enemy, must blow up the felucca, and perish with her. What say you? Is such a death not better than captivity? And then, think of my daughter,” added the unhappy father.

“*Coraggio, Eccellenza,*” cried the desperate Carbonari. “Trust us. We will perish to the last man sooner than allow a hair of the lady’s head to be injured.”

Scarcely was this resolution taken than the corsair ranged alongside of the becalmed coralline, to which she attached herself by grappling irons, and a crowd of desperadoes flung themselves down upon her deck. The Italians fought with the courage of despair, repulsing their foes three several times before the latter finally gained possession of the felucca. But the odds were too unequal for the combat to be long sustained; first one,

then another of the defenders were struck down, either by their foes on deck, or by the pirates on board the corsair, whose tall sides overtopped the diminutive coralline. Soon all were killed or wounded; Guiseppe Lombrico was forced overboard, but in his fall grappled an antagonist, and both men met a watery grave; Giacomo was struck down by a missile hurled from the deck of the corsair; and the Marquis was shot through the heart whilst striving to accomplish his desperate resolve of blowing up both friends and foes together. The pirates were successful, the felucca with all its heaps of dead and wounded was their lawful prize, and Bianca di Stella was a prisoner in the hands of the savage Algerines.

For several days the rover cruised about the Balearic Isles—days of agony and sorrow which will never be effaced from the memory of the poor captive girl, who, the only one of her sex on board, was kept closely confined in the corsair captain's after-cabin, a prey to a constant dread and terror which almost

bereft her of her senses. Of the fate of her father and his companions she was still in profound ignorance, for the Marquis had enjoined her to keep within her cabin during the conflict, and when, at its termination, the door was broken rudely open by the ruffianly pirates, the poor girl lost her senses, in which condition she had been removed to the galley. Her treatment here could not be termed actually bad, for no one intruded into her presence but the Moorish slave, who three times a-day brought a mess of *pilaff*, some wine or coffee, and almonds and raisins, on which fruits Bianca managed to keep body and soul together. But the anxiety relative to the fate of her father caused her to become seriously ill, and she was fast sinking beneath her load of sorrows when the rover arrived at Algiers.

The anchor had not been down an hour when the captive's cabin door was thrown open, and Giacomo Marsigli entered; but so changed from the cheerful light-hearted companion of yore, that the girl, on first be-

holding him, shrunk back terrified, almost doubting the evidence of her senses. His clothes were torn and blood-stained : his hat replaced by a ragged turban, bestowed upon him by one of his captors more charitable than the rest : his gay crimson sash gone, and replaced by a chain one hundred pounds in weight, which, after encircling the waist, extended down the right leg to the foot, where it was riveted to an iron ring fastened round the ankle.

Pale through loss of blood, and so weak as with difficulty to move beneath the weight of his fetters, Giacomo staggered into the cabin, when the girl, her astonishment past, rushed forward to embrace him, exclaiming, " Oh, *fratello mio*, my dear kind brother, tell me of my father, my own darling *babbo* ; tell me of yourself, and of your companions. Speak, I beseech you, Giacomo."

" I am sent to tell you to get ready to come on shore immediately, *cara mia*," replied the young man, hoping to evade the questions until the girl's bodily health would

have better fitted her for the reception of bad tidings. "I picked up enough Arabic to make myself understood when diving on this accursed coast, so the villains have made use of me as an interpreter."

"And are you to accompany me?" asked Bianca anxiously.

"That I know not yet. Yes, most probably," he added, observing her dejected look.

"And my *babbo*, my dear father, will he come too? Why do you not answer, Giacomo? You are cruel and wicked, and are attempting to deceive me. Where is my father? I command you to tell me. Is he on board this vessel?"

"No, *carissima*, he is not," replied her foster-brother, sorely puzzled how to act, feeling that the sad news would come better from him than from a stranger, and yet dreading the effect it would have upon her in her present weak condition; but the girl, who had been looking steadfastly into his face, divined the dread secret in a moment, and

when she asked point-blank, "Is my father dead?" he could only sorrowfully bow his head in silent assent.

Bianca had been in a measure prepared for this event, yet when it came home to her in all its dread reality—when she knew that he who had loved her so fondly was gone for ever—that never again would that kind parent return to caress his little daughter as of yore, a cry of anguish burst from her lips, and, throwing herself down upon the cabin cushions, she sobbed as though her very heart would break.

Small pity was shown towards the natural grief displayed by the orphan, for two negro slave women, entering the cabin, lifted her in their strong arms, and bore her away to a covered litter which was in waiting on the mole for her reception. In vain she asked for Giacomo; no answer was returned to her inquiries by her negress attendants, who probably understand no word of her language, and she remained in total ignorance of where they were conveying her, until, after



a journey of some two hours' duration, the litter halted before a large flat-roofed stone mansion, into which she was ushered by the women, who took her into a spacious apartment furnished in the European fashion, when, having set food before her, they retired, and left the unhappy girl to the solitude and repose she so cruelly needed.





#### CHAP. X.—THE RENEGADE.

THE house in which Bianca di Stella was confined stood on a gentle eminence, some four miles from the city of Algiers. It was a large, substantially-built mansion, of two stories in height; or perhaps it would be more correct to say it consisted of two separate houses, placed one in the rear of the other, and connected by an arched gallery, which ran between the upper stories of both dwellings. The building in front faced the road, and was occupied by the owner and his male domestics; the other house contained the apartments of the women, and was constructed without the side windows and lattices, which admitted light and air into the chambers of the men's dwelling; thus when

Bianca, after a night passed in fitful and unrefreshing slumber, went to her casement and looked out, she saw only the garden in which the house stood, whose high walls entirely excluded all view of the surrounding country.

Presently the negresses who had attended her on the previous day entered, bearing the various articles of clothing constituting the dress of Algerine women of the upper class. These, after a vapour bath, which removed her lassitude as though by enchantment, she was compelled to assume, while her attendants remained standing before her, seemingly lost in admiration at her wondrous beauty. The toilet completed, they brought coffee and other refreshments, which by signs they insisted upon her taking, then one of them left the room, to return in a few minutes accompanied by a tall handsome man, in Oriental garb, who, first bowing lowly, advanced towards the lady, and, to her astonishment, addressed her in very fair Italian.

“ Oh, *Signore!*” cried the poor girl,





**BIANCA IMPLORING SIDY MELIC'S PROTECTION.**

throwing herself at the stranger's feet, and bursting into tears at the sound of the beloved language—"oh, *Signore!* you are a European, perhaps a countryman, and will defend an unhappy maiden, whom cruel fate has bereft of her natural protector."

"Rise, lady," returned the stranger; "this is no attitude for you to assume before Sidy Melic, who is the humblest of your slaves."

"Then you are not a European?" cried Bianca, regarding his features with wonder.

"I am of Spanish parentage, but have long since learned the errors of the Christian faith, and am now a follower of Allah, and of Mahomet, his chosen servant."

"*Uno apostata!*" exclaimed Bianca, crossing herself, and shrinking back in horror from the renegade.

"Such we are called, I believe," returned Sidy Melic, his face pallid at the unconcealed scorn with which the girl viewed him, "but this is neither the time nor place to discuss religious differences. I am the owner of the galley that captured you, and nobody

regrets more than myself the unfortunate circumstances that then took place. Though I am a Mahommedan, young lady, I have still a human heart within my breast, and can feel for the sufferings of others; this I hope to prove to you at once. It is the law here that all prisoners are taken before the Dey, who selects such of the captives as strike his fancy, after which the remainder are sold. Now be not offended with me, or think that I wound your delicacy, when I say that if you appear before him thus, your superb beauty will at once consign you to a life of misery within the walls of his harem——”

“Mother of God, protect me!” murmured the unhappy maiden.

“But,” continued the renegade, “I have thought of a device by which you may escape so sad a destiny, and remain securely within the walls of this house, until an opportunity is afforded me of restoring you to your native land. Nay, thank me not,” he said, as Bianca uttered fervent expressions of gratitude, “but listen to my plan, which will

entail the loss of your beauty for some few hours; but to this you will hardly object, when you consider the important end we have in view."

"That signifies nothing," cried the girl, "absolutely nothing. Better that I should become the most hideous of my sex, than be doomed to a life of degradation too horrible to contemplate."

"My plan, then," continued Sidy Melic, "is to place you under the hands of your attendants here, who, by staining your skin with a wash, of which they know the secret, and by otherwise hiding your real loveliness, will so change your appearance for the time, that you will pass through the ordeal unnoticed. Do you consent to this artifice?"

"Oh! willingly and cheerfully," exclaimed the girl.

"Then I will direct them to commence their task without delay, for by noon we must be at the Dey's palace. You see that I am truly desirous of befriending you," he added; "for were our scheme discovered,



Sidy Melic would soon be supping with the houris in Paradise."

The renegade then clapped his hands, gave some directions in Arabic to the negresses who answered his summons, and, after bowing respectfully to his captive, quitted the inner house, and returned by the gallery to his own apartment.

"Now for a glass of Cognac after so successful an interview with the little chit," he said aloud, on gaining his own room. "And what a lovely creature she is, and so truly ingenuous! Fancy her believing that I should send her back to Italy—I, Sidy Melic, formerly cashier of the National Bank at Seville, but now, by the blessing of Allah, chief adviser to his Highness the Dey of Algiers, and the most prosperous man in the country—that I should ever dream of sending this little enchantress back seems deliciously absurd. No, no, young lady, those lovely eyes will never again look upon the purple mountains and smiling pastures of Italy; a far more exalted career is before

you as the favourite wife of the Dey, Omar. Disguised by those old witches, he will scarcely glance at her; then, immured within these walls, I can gradually, by flattering her hopes of liberty, teach her to lean upon me, and gain an ascendancy over her that will be invaluable. I know Omar's taste in woman so well, that I feel confident he will become desperately enamoured of this little beauty in half-an-hour. Then I can sell her—against my intention, of course; oh yes, strongly against your wish, dear Sidy, which is only to restore her to liberty," and the scheming scoundrel laughed aloud at his own pleasantry—"can sell her for a higher price than female captive ever yet fetched in Algiers, and shall at the same time secure a friend within the palace harem, by whose means I shall hold the obstinate old fool Omar completely under my thumb. What a head for combinations the bank lost, when gambling debts forced me to levant with a bundle of securities!" he continued, charmed at the precious villainy he was concocting.

“Why, I should have been Minister of Finance by this time. But it is ten o'clock, and Bianca must start. Here's success to the device which will render me the richest man in Algiers;” and after draining a fresh tumbler of spirits, the ex-cashier ordered his horse, and rode into the town.

The remaining prisoners captured by the corsair during her cruise, some thirty in number, were conveyed, on her arrival, to the castle, and placed for the night in dark filthy dungeons beneath the foundations of the building. In the morning they were taken to a bath-house, and after their hair had been cut, and their beards shaved, were clothed in coarse linen drawers and tunic, in which guise they were to appear before Omar Pasha, Dey and Governor of Algiers. Giacomo Marsigli was amongst these unfortunates, the chain he had worn on the previous day being removed for the occasion, and on gaining the court of the castle, he gazed anxiously along the ranks of his fellow-captives, in the hope of discerning his

foster-sister, and could scarcely credit the evidence of his senses when the only female present, a decrepit, blear-eyed old hag, dressed in a hideous yellow garb, hanging in unsightly folds about her waist, whispered to him in the clear bell-like tones of Bianca—

“*Coraggio, fratello mio*; I have made a kind friend who will shield me from all harm. Do not appear to recognise me, and take no notice of me in any way, whilst I am in this disguise.”

“God bless him, whoever he be, that protects my little sister,” answered Giacomo, falling back amongst his fellow-prisoners as an official approached, who instructed the captives in the obeisances they were to make when paraded before the Dey. They were then blindfolded, and marched forward by a strong guard of soldiers, until the fortifications were passed, when the bandages round their eyes were removed, and they were allowed to look about them.

The cortége, followed by an immense crowd, wound along the narrow streets until

they reached the palace, to which they were admitted after many ceremonials. The Dey was seated at one end of a large open court, upon a divan covered with heavy velvet drapery, fringed with gold. A silken canopy was raised above his head, from which descended embroidered curtains, looped up into festoons by golden cords, sewn with seed pearls. On either side of the potentate stood his principal officers, the *Mufti* and his *Hadgis*, and a guard of some two hundred soldiers, drawn up in the form of a crescent.

Omar Pasha appeared to be a man of about forty years of age, with a ferocious and sensual countenance, which inspired awe rather than commanded respect. He was magnificently dressed in the Turkish costume; his feet shod with sandals, bound round the ankles with diamond buttons, in loops of pearl; from his scarf protruded the handles of a poniard and of a brace of pistols, all richly mounted; and upon his head was placed a turban with a raised point, the mark of royalty, adorned in front with a

large diamond crescent, from which sprang two long ostrich feathers.

The prisoners were commanded to approach the foot of the divan in turns, prostrating themselves before the Dey, in token of reverence and submission. When within a few paces of the canopy they arose to their feet, and the potentate examined them, dismissing such as he had no wish to retain by a nod of his head, questioning others through his interpreters, and finally selecting such as he judged would prove most useful, or fetch the highest ransom; for the latter constituting a great part of his revenue, policy led him to select those captives whose friends were likely to pay highest for their release.

Both Giacomo and Bianca passed the presence without notice, except that, when the seeming old woman hobbled past, the Dey turned round to the renegade, who was amongst the officers at his side, and remarked jestingly, "That will make a valuable addition to your harem, Melic;" at which

profound observation the assembled group laughed, as all good courtiers should at royal jests; and none more heartily than the double-dealing rascal to which it was addressed, who saw in the speech a truth little dreamt of by his companions in merriment.

This ceremony concluded, such of the captives as had escaped the Dey were marched to prison, and there guarded by some of the men belonging to the rover that had taken them. Bianca had no opportunity to communicate again with her foster-brother, for the litter was in waiting within the prison, and in it she was re-conveyed to the house of Sidy Melic, who, later in the evening, again visited her, to offer his congratulations upon the success of their *ruse*.

Every kindness was now shown to the sorrowing girl by the wily renegade, a part of whose scheme it was to really attach her to himself by the bonds of gratitude. During the first week that succeeded the visit to Omar, he saw her but once a-day, and then only to inquire if any want remained unsatis-

fied. He had far too much tact to obtrude his presence when he would have been unwelcome, but by a thousand crafty little devices he showed his captive that he took a genuine interest in her comfort and welfare. Leaving her therefore to recover her strength in the house of Sidy Melic, let us now turn to the other prisoner in whom we are interested, and see how it fared with him.

Giacomo Marsigli, and such of his fellow-captives as remained unsold by private contract, were clothed in a coarse camel-hair cloak, with only a girdle round the loins, and in this scanty attire conducted to a spacious square, which the various articles exposed for sale indicated to be the public market. Here, mixed up with fruits, flowers, mules, kicking horses, screaming camels, asses, and goats, were stationed the human articles, made in the image of God, in the hope that they would find purchasers amongst the crowd, who bustled through the stalls or pens, and seemed to regard the acquirements of a new ass and a new slave as much upon a par,



provided both were sound and free from vice. This latter quality was more essential in the brute than in the human beast, for in the former it was probably ineradicable, whilst it was hard if a course of protracted maltreatment did not effectually knock it out of the latter.

The captives now perceived the *raison d'être* of their light attire, for it enabled contemplating purchasers to feel every muscle of their bodies, to move their limbs to and fro, and to make sure that there was no defect in their figures. Around the neck of each slave was suspended a flat oval piece of wood, much resembling a painter's palette, on which was inscribed the country, age, and height of its wearer, together with the occupation that he had followed previous to his capture. Giacomo, who could speak Arabic very fairly, told the people who showed any disposition to buy him that he was useless on land, having been accustomed from boyhood to a sea life, and the corsairs were in despair of getting rid of him, when a shrivelled-up

old Mahommedan appeared upon the scene, and, dismounting from his ass, proceeded to examine the slaves with much attention. Giacomo heaved a deep sigh on beholding the old man, and murmured, "Now Our Lady be merciful to me, and grant that I may not be recognised by Muley Hamet of Bona. Death were preferable to servitude under such a master."

The old Mähommedan was evidently well known by the slave merchants, who greeted him most respectfully, and Giacomo heard them whisper—

"Here comes old Muley, the best patron we have, for none of his purchases last more than two years, thanks to the work he gives them."

The Bona merchant passed along the file of captives, examining some, scornfully rejecting others, and buying one or two, until at last he stood before Giacomo, whose arms he felt, muttering—

"So! A fine able-bodied Christian dog, and one that will last beyond a twelvemonth.

Let us look at his face. What!" he cried, starting back, "is it you, friend Marsigli? Allah be praised that I have now an opportunity of repaying the blow you gave me at Bona two years ago!" and a malicious smile lighted up his face as he asked the young Italian's price, and agreed to it without a word, to the intense disgust of the corsairs, who never forgave themselves for not asking a larger sum.

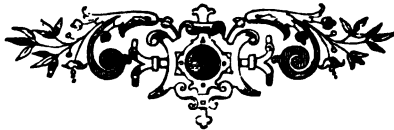
The officer whose duty it was to attest the contract now appeared, and on Muley Hamet handing over the money, Giacomo was compelled to lie down in the street, when his new master placed his foot on his neck, a degrading formality which caused the merchant a thrill of pleasure, and one that the slave knew it was useless to resist. He was then chained to Muley's other purchases, and all were conducted by a guard to his house.

Whilst in charge of one of the Marquis's corallines, Marsigli had been brought into frequent contact with his new master, who

had supplied the fishing-boats with such necessaries as they needed. The merchant's treatment of his wretched slaves, whom he purchased for the coral fishery, was deprecated even by his own countrymen, and it was in defending a miserable Neapolitan from the unjust attacks of Muley that the latter drew his knife, and Giacomo was compelled, in self-defence, to strike it from his grasp ; an insult which the Moslem cherished within his breast, and vowed to revenge if it were ever in his power.

Such was the master into whose hands the luckless Giacomo had fallen, and who vented his spite by subjecting the unresisting slave to every species of degradation, hoping that he would rebel, when the fearful punishment of impalement would be inflicted upon him by the merciless laws of Algiers. But the memory of his foster-sister made the young man endure every inhumanity his master could devise without a murmur. "She has no one left but me," he thought, "and I must submit to everything for her sake."

This fixed determination not to gratify his owner by insubordination brought its own reward, for Muley, becoming aware that his slave would never commit himself, sent him down to the harbour, and hired his services to such ship-captains as required small repairs made to the bottoms of their vessels by a skilful diver. This mode of life was far more endurable than the constant persecution to which he was subjected when under the eye of the vindictive old merchant, and had he but known of Bianca's welfare, Giacomo would have been as contented as it was possible for one in his unhappy position.





CHAP. XI.—THE EMIR.

**T**WELVE months have passed away since the capture of the felucca by the galley, and the course of our story once more brings us to the mansion of Sidy Melic, the Spanish renegade.

Within the principal chamber of the outer house were assembled a number of men in Turkish garb, some seated cross-legged on the carpets, smoking their chibouques, others extended on the velvet divans that surrounded the apartment. These were the guests of Sidy Melic, who was giving a great feast to his friends, in honour of a new and lucrative appointment just bestowed upon him by the Dey. Unlike most of his abstemious nation, the renegade was deeply addicted to the pleasures of the table, and

the excited tones in which he was speaking showed that he heeded but little that portion of his new religion which enjoined abstention from intoxicating liquors.

“Yes, my friends,” he continued, addressing the grave figures around him, who in their inward hearts viewed his intemperance with loathing and disgust—“yes, I have got the little bird that is to make my fortune safely caged in the harem there. How will she manage it? perhaps you ask. Ah! that is my secret. These little things must not be told even amongst friends,” and he gazed around with the profound wisdom of drunkenness.

The entrance of slave boys bearing coffee put an end to Sidy’s ramblings, and having swallowed the black beverage, the guests rose, and bade their host farewell. One only remained, a young Arab of noble bearing, whose pipe was unfinished, and who had followed the renegade’s wild talk with undisguised contempt. Returning from the gate to which he had accompanied his friends,

Sidy saw the Arab chief still seated on the divan, and a look of drunken fear and perplexity passed for a moment over his face; but a sudden idea seemed to strike him, and, after swallowing a glass of brandy, he advanced and said—

“ My brother the Emir Abdallah is always a welcome guest, but doubly so now, for we are alone, and I can show him the secret springs whereby I intend to bring our project to a successful issue.”

A close observer would have seen the Arab chieftain's nostril dilate when the renegade pronounced the word “brother,” but the latter noticed it not, and, seating himself by Abdallah's side, proceeded to lay bare his scheme of selling Bianca to the Dey, and profiting by the influence he would thus acquire in the harem for the furtherance of the intrigue which he had in view.

“ It is the most simple thing in the world,” he continued, carried away by the grandeur of his subject, and unreservedly exposing his inner thoughts. “ The little fool believes in



me thoroughly, and, under the impression that I shall soon restore her to her native land, has been leading a life of contentment here which has increased her beauty tenfold. Through her, Emir, we shall ascertain where Omar has hidden his treasure; once in possession of that, we can buy the army; your tribe can be encamped outside the city; at the given moment we can seize the Dey, or shoot him at once; you shall be placed on the throne in his stead, and I shall be your most obedient Grand Vizier. Under a wiser government the resources of the country will be developed, and you will be the wealthiest Mussulman ruler on the globe, whose alliance kings and princes will be proud to seek. Better that, than galloping about the parched desert at the head of your tribe, eh, Emir?" and the renegade's eyes sparkled at the brilliant future that the deposition of Omar would bring him, utterly unmindful that the man he was conspiring to overthrow had always treated him with the utmost kindness, and that it was to his generosity that the

ragged Spanish fugitive of five years before owed his present wealth and position.

“But how can you sell the young lady if you have promised to restore her to liberty?” asked the Arab.

“Why, you surely do not suppose I ever meant to keep my word, do you?” asked Sidy, in the utmost astonishment. “Such promises, which are made for expediency, are never binding.”

“So it seems,” returned the Emir drily.

“But you shall see her, Abdallah—shall gaze upon her unveiled loveliness, and then tell me if you think Omar will be able to resist her charms,” cried the renegade, in a fresh access of confidence, brought on by another bumper of brandy; and, seizing the Arab’s arm, he dragged him along the arched gallery to the women’s apartment, and knocked at Bianca’s door.

“Enter,” cried a soft voice, and in a moment the two men stood in her presence.

“A friend of mine, Bianca,” said Sidy in Arabic.

“And as such always welcome,” exclaimed the girl in the same language, extending her hand to the young Emir, who stood lost in astonishment at a loveliness such as he had never before beheld. “The merest acquaintance of one so kind to me as Sidy Melic deserves a warm reception, much more one whom he styles his friend.”

After clapping her hands for coffee, Bianca entered into conversation with the handsome young chief, telling him her sad history—poor child! her visitors were rare, and she was glad to open her heart to any listener—and dwelling on the great kindness she had received from the renegade, whose virtues, in her real gratitude, she extolled to the skies.

“And soon I am to return to Italy,” she continued, addressing the Emir, who drank in her broken Arabic with greedy ears—“to my own dear island of Sicily, though who there will be to receive the orphan I know not, but the same merciful and loving God that has given me a true friend and protector in this strange country will never desert me

when I reach the land of my birth ;” and she smiled gratefully, though tearfully, at Sidy, who was listening to his own praises with a show of modesty and deprecation edifying in the extreme.

“Is she not lovely? Is not our plan certain of success?” asked the renegade, when they returned to the dining apartment.

The Emir had followed like one in a dream, but the sound of Sidy’s voice recalled him to himself, and with every muscle quivering with excitement, he thus addressed his astonished host—

“Renegade hound! only the salt that has passed between us this day prevents me from ridding the earth of such a monster of hypocrisy and cold-blooded villainy. Nay, seek not for assistance,” he added, drawing his scimitar with lightning rapidity, and passing the keen edge over the silken bell rope, which fell severed to the earth. “Hear me out, or I shall be tempted in my wrath to forget that you are my host. Think you that I, Abdallah, Emir of the Ben Yeshah,

the descendant of a thousand warriors whose lightest boast it is never to have forsaken friend or forgotten foe, would owe one hair's-breadth of advancement to a treachery so base that none but an apostate dog like thyself could ever have conceived it? No, by Allah! not though the goal were a throne rich as Solomon's. Thy conspiracy against Omar I entered into willingly, but little imagining that yonder angel was to be sacrificed against every law of faith and hospitality. Now listen to me, Sidy Melic, and remember you speak with one who to purchase life itself would not blister his tongue with a falsehood. Yon maiden shall have no part in this, or in any other scheme that may be hereafter hatched by thy plotting brain, for thou shalt fulfil the promise made voluntarily to her, and she shall be free—free as the wild gazelle of the great Sahara. Furthermore, thou shalt accompany me again to her presence, and there, whilst I stand by to hear thee, shall confess to the lady the villainy thou hadst in view, that she may know thee

in thy true character, and loathe and despise as much as she now respects and honours thee. This thou shalt do, if thy false tongue shrivels not up at shaping the utterances of truth, or I will—nay, shrink not, thy life is safe here—I will go at once to Omar and acquaint him with the traitorous villain that he nurses within his bosom. One word to him — though a usurper, he is a brave soldier—would place thee for ever beyond the sphere of plots and intrigues, and bring thee face to face with that prophet of the Christians whom you have so basely abjured. You consent, then?” for the renegade, ashy pale with terror at the fearful picture, had sunk on his knees before the indignant Arab, and grovelled on the ground, signifying in abject terms his readiness to do all that his guest dictated. “You consent?—then lead the way to the lady’s apartment.”

The grief, horror, and indignation of the captive girl, on hearing the confession mercilessly extorted from Sidy by the Emir, may easily be imagined ; he to whom for so many

months she had looked for counsel and support had proved so double-dyed a villain, that now she knew not whether even this appalling revelation might not be part of some new scheme to ruin her future life. But one glance at the noble features of the young Arab chieftain served to dispel this suspicion, and, as if reading her doubts, he continued, addressing Sidy—

“And now, take instant measures for the release of this lady. What dost thou propose?”

“If the Dey learns that she is in Algiers, we are lost,” returned the renegade, now completely sobered, and he explained the device by which Bianca had passed before Omar unnoticed. “I must convey her along the coast to Bona, and there charter a vessel to land her in Europe; even this will be attended with much difficulty, and may cost me my life.”

“The plan is a good one,” said the Emir after a moment’s consideration, “and if thou obeyest me implicitly, thy plotting head may

remain some little time longer safe upon thy shoulders. I will relieve thee of this part of thy duty, and will myself escort the lady secretly to Bona—if she will so far honour her humble slave as to entrust herself to his care,” he added, bowing lowly to Bianca, who was alternately regarding both the speakers in this strange interview, which exercised so deep an influence over her future life.

“Oh! willingly,” she replied in answer to the Arab’s question, “most thankfully; and the prayers of the orphan will ever be offered up for the welfare of the brave stranger who has intervened to save her from a degradation worse than a thousand deaths.”

After another courteous inclination in acknowledgment of this speech, the Emir drew his host into an adjoining apartment, and said in stern, commanding tones—

“Then, Sidy Melic, all is settled. Hearest thou? Order forth thy curtained litter, which shall bear the lady away at once to my camp.



Yet think not, renegade, that Abdallah wishes to rob thee of the worthless gold that thou holdest so dear. Take this ring"—and he withdrew from his finger a large stone engraved with an Arabic cypher—"to *Yoosef*, the Jew merchant on the mole, in two days' time, and he will hand thee over whatever sum thou namest for the maiden, who from this moment is as sacred from thy profane machinations as though heaven itself had claimed her."

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"Christian dog," cried old Muley Hamet one morning to Giacomo, "get thee with all speed to the encampment of the Emir Abdallah, and acquaint him that the vessel he ordered is now ready for sea. Move thy lazy legs, or the whip will be thy portion."

The slave answered never a word, but set off for the tents of the Ben Yeshah tribe, which were pitched upon a picturesque plain some miles from the seaport of Bona. The camel-skin dwelling of the chief was readily distinguished by the long spear planted in

the sand before it, and to this Giacomo immediately repaired, and, finding the owner within, delivered his message.

“Of what country art thou?” inquired the Emir, who had been eyeing him intently.

“I am an Italian—a Sicilian sailor,” replied Marsigli.

“An Italian!” returned the chief in much surprise. “Then await me here, for I may require thy services in explaining to a lady from thine own country what measures thy master has taken to secure her comfort on board the vessel;” and he turned towards a larger and better equipped tent than his own, leaving the slave in a flutter of excitement he was unable to repress.

“Come hither,” cried the Arab from the door of the tent, and with faltering footstep and beating heart Marsigli complied.

“Is fate tired of persecuting me at last?” thought the weary captive, “or is this strange feeling of hope I experience to be dashed to the ground as so many other expectations have been, built on a more solid

basis than this? God only knows, and to His mercy I trust."

"Tell this lady——" commenced the Emir, but his sentence was cut short by the little cry of delight which issued from Bianca's lips, as, throwing herself upon the neck of the slave, she exclaimed, "*Fratello mio*, my dear, dear brother!"

"Her foster-brother of whom she has told me so much," thought the chieftain, withdrawing to his own tent, that his presence might not interfere with the meeting. "Ah, Christian slave! you are ill-clad, ill-fed, and hardly worked, yet how gladly would I take thy place were my reward an embrace such as she bestowed on thee. But my dream is over, the sun of my life has set, and in a few hours the horizon of my brief existence will be plunged in deepest darkness. Allah knows how fondly, how truly I love her, though never by word or action have I led her to suspect it. Now I will ride into the town and ransom this slave; the sweet smile with which she will greet me

would be reward enough for a far greater kindness."

The first explanations between the friends, thus strangely re-united, over, and each having given to the other a brief account of what had occurred since their separation, the thought that they had been brought together only to be parted in a few hours recurred to both, and destroyed the happiness they would otherwise have felt.

"I will beg the Emir to ransom you, dear Giacomo," said the girl, "though his kindness to me has been such, and the delicacy with which he has treated me so great, that I blush to ask of him another favour. Oh, *fratello!* if you only knew the way Abdallah—I mean the Emir"—and Bianca blushed—"has watched over me, forestalling my slightest wish, and behaving to me as though I were a loved sister rather than a defenceless captive. Had you seen him when, on our way here, we were attacked by a tribe of hostile Arabs; how he mounted me on his fleetest steed, that I might escape

were our side worsted, and then rode into the thickest of the foe, hewing his way through their ranks as though they had been corn and his yatagan the sickle, until in dismay at such a hero they broke and fled; had you but seen this, and a thousand other circumstances that I am unable to mention, you would understand the feeling of respect I entertain towards my deliverer."

"But you will be happy in dear Sicily, Bianca," said Giacomo, "and find a hundred kind friends who will protect you."

"Shall I?" replied the girl in an absent tone, and evidently thinking little of what she said.

"Why, you seem scarcely pleased at going there!" exclaimed Giacomo in much surprise.

"Oh yes, I do," cried Bianca hastily, and blushing crimson; "I should be ungrateful indeed could I ever forget Messina, and—and——"

Her voice dropped, for the Emir entered, holding in his hand a sheet of parchment

which he presented to Bianca, who, after glancing at it, handed it to Giacomo—it was his certificate of freedom.

“Tell them to saddle you a horse,” he said to the happy young man, “and we will ride down together and see that everything is ready for your sister. It will be time enough to thank me then.”

“Free! free!” thought Giacomo, rushing out to do the Emir’s bidding. “Free! and once more with Bianca, my own loved sister. But how changed she is! and how little the prospect of seeing Italy arouses her. *Santa Maria!*” he cried aloud, to the intense astonishment of the graye Arabs who were seated around. “*Santa Maria!* Fool that I was not to see it before! No wonder she is so careless about Italy, when she hates to leave Africa. She loves the chieftain; it is all clear as daylight. Well, well, we shall soon see how it all ends.”

Marsigli having procured his horse, waited with it at the Emir’s tent; but the young warrior seemed to have forgotten his pro-

jected ride into Bona, for at least two hours passed before he came to the door and beckoned the fisherman to approach.

“Brother,” he cried in Arabic, his eyes beaming with a great joy, “your sister will not require the boat, for she has consented to live with me here in the desert, but it is at my brother’s service should he wish to return to Italy.”

“Where my mistress stays, there will I abide,” said Giacomo simply, as he pressed an affectionate kiss upon Bianca’s forehead.





CHAP. XII.—THE WHITE LILY.

THE reader may remember that at the close of an earlier chapter we left Bob Granville, his young messmate Vernon, and old Newbould the quartermaster, in the tent of an Arab Sheikh, the two former under the guardianship of a Bedouin maiden, who had broken off authoritatively the conversation which Granville, just recovered from unconsciousness, wished to hold with the old sailor.

Yes, they had been saved from the watery grave that held the hapless *Syren* and her crew. Of nearly three hundred men that a fortnight before had left Gibraltar in health and high spirits, proud of the noble vessel that bore them, and looking forward with



pleasure to a four years' commission in the classic Mediterranean ; of all these but three remained—three sole survivors—indebted for their preservation to the friendly Arabs, who, by a happy accident, were encamped in the vicinity of the wreck, and who had shown a bravery in rescuing the castaways, followed by a tenderness in providing for their immediate wants—nay, even for their comfort—which had completely won the heart of the rugged old seaman, whose sturdy frame soon recovered from the effects of the buffeting and bruising to which it had been subjected.

For many hours both Granville and Vernon had remained insensible, despite the most powerful restoratives possessed by the Arabs, administered by their young nurse with a skill which proved her no novice in the art of medicine ; but at last the former had opened his eyes, when the brief conversation that I have already recorded took place.

On the following morning he was sufficiently convalescent to demolish a large

bowl of *cuscaïsson*,\* to the evident astonishment of the Arab girl, who was quite unprepared for this manifestation of the rapidity with which that most elastic of phenomena, a midshipman's stomach, regains its tone and powers; and, apparently satisfied that all present danger to the patient was passed,

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\* *Cuscaïsson* is made of flour and water, kneaded together until it forms a firm paste, which is divided into small pieces of a cylindrical form about the size and shape of a man's finger; these pieces are then further reduced by slicing, and dividing them dexterously with the hands, an art only learned after long practice; the grains thus obtained are then spread upon a napkin, and exposed to the sun, which soon hardens them. So much for the preparation of the main ingredient; now comes the cooking.

To boil *cuscaïsson*, a peculiar pot, whose bottom is perforated with small round holes, becomes necessary, into which is put the grain, together with a proportionate quantity of butter. This pot fits into a larger one, filled by the poor with water only, but to which the better classes always add meat or poultry. The double utensil, thus charged, is placed upon the fire, when the steam which ascends from the lower compartment enters through the small holes to the upper, and boils the grains.

When cooked, the meat is placed in a dish, surrounded and covered with the *cuscaïsson*, which forms a pyramid entirely without gravy. Great art is requisite to know the exact moment when the pot should be removed from the fire, at which time every grain should be perfectly loose and free from its neighbours; if served up too early or too late, the grains are either sodden or adhere to each other, mischances which would destroy the reputation of an Arab or Moorish cook. *Cuscaïsson* is easily procured and conveyed, and has, moreover, the advantages of being wholesome, nourishing, and agreeable.

she made no opposition when Granville, by signs, signified his wish to see old Newbould.

The quartermaster was seated at the fire which was crackling before one of the tents, smoking his pipe, and seemingly as much at home in the desert as on the fore-castle; for with one hand he was stirring the savoury contents of an iron pot suspended over the fire, and with the other petting half-a-dozen naked little brown urchins who were striving to displace one another from the post of honour, his knee. The mothers were standing round, looking with wondering eyes at the weather-beaten Giaour, who interfered without scruple in their domestic concerns, carrying water for one, fetching wood for another, smiling with wonderful and inexplicable gestures at all, and generally conducting himself in a fashion so totally opposed to that of their own lords and masters, as to excite feelings of mingled curiosity, astonishment, and gratitude in the breasts of these children of the desert. On seeing Granville emerge from the Sheikh's



NEWBOULD AND THE YOUNG ARABS.



tent, old Newbould arose, signed to the women to continue stirring the decoction in the pot, dislodged the youngster from his knee, and, hastening towards his officer, touched the curious-looking turban which encircled his brows in welcome.

“Good morning, Newbould,” cried Robert, the tears filling his eyes as he grasped the old sailor’s hand. “Come, if you are not busy, and tell me all about what has happened. It seems like a dream—O God! what an awful one!” and the young man shuddered.

“You are weak, sir,” returned Newbould kindly. “Take my arm, and we will go to the well, where there is good shade. Now, then, top your booms and sheer off, young shiver-the-mizzens,” he continued, addressing the youngsters, who showed no disposition to leave him. “And you, old girls,” to the Arab women, whose large wondering eyes were alone visible beneath their veils, “you makee roundy-cum-roundo the iron potty-cum-potto. You savee?” and he twisted the

dripping spoon which he still retained in his hand in further explanation.

“*Nāāhām, nāāhām*” (yes, yes), laughed the women.

“What, are you turned cook?” asked Granville in surprise.

“Lord bless you, sir, they know nothing, don’t these Arabs. I have been teaching them how to make a Christian stew instead of their outlandish *cuscaou*. But they ain’t a bad lot when you come to know ’em. That lovely creature the Sheikh’s daughter saved your life, sir, there is no doubt about that. Now sit down here, sir; this is the well.”

“Tell me everything, Newbould, from the time I stood on the thwart and waved to the horseman; that is the last I can remember,” said Granville, gladly sinking down on the camel-hair rug which the old sailor spread out on the sand for his reception.

“Well, sir, a sea washed over the cutter and threw you against the thwart, which stunned you, but I managed to pass the end of the painter round you, which kept your

mouth pretty clear of the water until the Emir, as they call him, dragged us out. By the Lord, sir," continued the quartermaster, warming to his subject, "there was a good sailor spoilt when the Emir became a horse-soldier. What a top-gallant yardman he'd have made! Fifteen years now, come February, have I been up the Gut, and——"

"But who is this Emir? Who do you mean? Recollect I know nothing, and you must inform me of every particular," broke in Robert, who dreaded his companion's digressive method of telling a story.

"Who is the Emir? Why, sir, he is the son of the Sheikh, and brother to the young lady who has nursed you. It was the Emir—Azir his name is—to whom you waved. Directly he saw the boat, he galloped back to the camp, and, calling all hands, returned to our rescue. Without a moment's hesitation he dashed into the water, whether his horse liked it or not. "None of your damned half-laughs and purser's grins," I heard him say to his horse



when he luffed up in the wind instead of steering straight ahead. "I tell you to go, and go you shall, if I unship every hair on your hide-bound carcass."

"Did he say this in English?" asked the amazed officer.

"Well, no, sir," returned Newbould, after a little hesitation, "not quite in English. But, bless you, I understood every word, and he *did* launch his horse, and took off Mr. Vernon first, and then came back for you; and, last of all, he brought out a rope, which I bent on to the boat's painter, and a camel hauled the cutter up high and dry, with me in it. That's the way we were saved, and I say that the Almighty spoilt a good sailor when he made——"

"But the others, Newbould? Tell me about the others. What became of Mr. Constable, and the rest of our shipmates?"

"All gone, sir, all lost the number of their mess," answered the old sailor, a shade passing over his weather-beaten face. "I knew it must end that way when I saw them

strike out for the shore. Why, the sharks are in hundreds amongst the breakers."

Granville hid his face and shuddered as the quartermaster continued, lowering his voice almost to a whisper—

"Yes, in hundreds. I saw Mr. Constable taken down by one, sir, though I said nothing about it at the time. Awful, Mr. Granville, awful! And there are none there now, sir. I went down to the beach this morning in hopes of finding the bodies of some of our shipmates, but never a back fin is to be seen above water. All gone to the wreck, sir. A shark knows better even than a vulture."

"For God's sake, say no more, Newbould," broke in the young man, horrified at the dreadful scene his companion was calling up; "but tell me what passed after we were brought ashore. Did you lose your senses?"

"No, sir; thank God, I escaped so far unhurt as to be able to walk up here, and to see that both you and Mr. Vernon were in better hands than mine. One of the chief men with the Sheikh, sir, was a doctor, or

something of that sort, and he soon found out what was the matter with Mr. Vernon, and set his leg, besides putting something on his hand to prevent the inflammation from spreading."

"Where is he now, Newbould? I saw just now that his cot was empty."

"The young lady had him removed this morning, sir, before you were awake. Four men carried him on a sort of stretcher to another tent just round the hill there."

"What did they do that for, I wonder?" asked Granville, much annoyed to hear that he was separated from his wounded mess-mate. "What a yarn we should have had together!"

"I beg pardon, sir," said Newbould, "but perhaps that was the very reason why the lady had his berth shifted. If you two young gentlemen had once got alongside of each other, and commenced spinning yarns, Mr. Vernon would, like enough, have got worse, instead of better."

"Well, I suppose I shall be allowed to see him," sighed Robert. "But go on with your

story, Newbould; you have not told me half yet. Where is the Emir? What did you say his name was?"

"Azir, sir. He and his father rode away this morning, accompanied by most of the men, and I don't know when they are to return—in a week's time, the women hope, but they can't tell. I think they have gone on an expedition against the French."

"How can that be?" asked Granville; "the Tunisians are on good terms with the French."

"This tribe belongs to Algiers, sir—at least they often mention the name."

"And the young lady?" he inquired. "Have you learnt anything about her?"

"Nothing more than what I have told you, sir. But there she is at the door of your tent, waving; we must go in, sir."

After conducting his officer to the tent, old Newbould withdrew to the fire, to see how far the Arab women had complied with his lucid instructions of "roundy-cum-roundo;" and Robert Granville entering the camel-hair dwelling, found himself in the presence of

two negress slaves, and of the girl to whose kindness and tender nursing he undoubtedly owed his life. This young gentleman was a midshipman, and as such possessed little of the shyness so common amongst lads of eighteen; therefore he was advancing with outstretched hand to thank her frankly in such honest heartfelt words as he could command, when his eyes, for the first time, rested fairly on her face, and he halted in pure astonishment at the wondrous beauty of his preserver. A girl, young and perhaps pretty, he had been prepared for, by the old quartermaster's description, but that worthy sailor's taste in womankind not being over-refined, he had pictured to himself a spare tawny-coloured Arab girl, tatoed about the chin and neck, and only showing her face to the castaways because, although of the male sex, they were unbelievers and infidels, in whose presence it was not necessary to muffle up the features, leaving only the eyes visible, as the law of their prophet enjoined when in company with their male co-

religionists. But for such a beautiful apparition as now stood before him the young man was wholly unprepared, and stood still in amazement, until the maiden with a sweet smile advanced, held out her hand, which he bashfully clasped, and led him to a large divan occupying the space vacated by Harry Vernon's cot, on which she begged him to be seated, in French—hardly Parisian in its accent, it is true, but nevertheless perfectly intelligible.

The midshipman was now enabled to observe his companion more closely, whilst she, in turn, scrutinised him with no little curiosity. He saw a young girl of some seventeen summers, rather above than below the middle height, her face oval, with a brow of alabaster whiteness, presenting a most striking contrast to the masses of raven hair that flowed over her shoulders. The picturesque dress she wore added to the effect of her superb natural beauty. The luxuriant hair, parted on the smooth broad forehead, and cut rather shorter in front than behind,

descended in natural ringlets on either side of the face, which seemed set in a waving sea of glossy ebony. Amidst the dark mass was entwined a kerchief of crimson and gold, whose broad folds formed a miniature turban on the upper part of the head, over the back of which was thrown a long veil of snowy whiteness, reaching almost to the ground, and ornamented at its extremities by a broad fringe of gold thread. A white silken chemise, partly open at the neck, revealed the shapely throat, encircled by a necklace of amber, from the centre of which depended a crucifix. This garment descended below the *shintiyan*, or large loose trousers, which were confined at the waist by a Cashmere girdle. Above both chemise and trousers was placed the *yelek*, a closely-fitting vest of pink silk, cut low at the bosom, and buttoned down as far as the waist, from whence it descended to the ground in graceful folds. Over the *yelek* was worn the *saltah*, a loose unfastened jacket of green Genoese velvet, with loose sleeves, the whole richly em-

broidered with dead-gold lace. The *shinti-yan*, though fitting tight as a stocking from the knee to the ankle, were made so long as to descend in ample folds to the naked little blue-veined feet, which were thrust into yellow leather slippers, curved upward at the extremities, and ornamented with patterns in gold thread.

But it was not so much the richness of the attire, as the expression of the face, that attracted the admiration of the young man. The features, though of the Arab type, showed none of the more marked characteristics of that race, all sharpness and angularity being toned down into rounded loveliness by the large admixture of European blood flowing in the girl's veins, a fact betrayed in a moment by the peach-like tint which mantled her cheek on the present occasion. The large dark eyes, too, had a melting softness to be found only amongst the women of Southern Europe, and the complexion in its fairness might have been envied by our Northern beauties. As she sat



on the soft cushions of the divan, Robert Granville's thoughts reverted to a picture of the Madonna he had seen in one of the churches at Lisbon, a face saint-like in its purity, and he felt as one in a dream at finding himself confronted with this lovely maiden, who might have been the ideal of an old Italian master, clad in the flowing and gorgeous drapery of the sunny East.

When his first wonder at the girl had died away, the thought of the sorry plight in which the sea had left him, reduced to a torn shirt and a shrunken pair of blue trousers, flashed across the young man's brain, and a blush rose to his cheek as he glanced downward at his scanty and disordered apparel. The girl, who was attentively observing him, seemed to read his thoughts, for she said, speaking in French, with which Granville was thoroughly conversant, "My father has sent to Tunis for clothes for you all; European garments, tight and ugly—not like these, loose and comfortable;" and she shook the flowing skirt of her pink *yeleh*.

“What a musical voice, and what lovely teeth!” thought the susceptible midshipman; “but now I must muster up my pluck and thank her. Lady,” he continued aloud, bowing lowly and blushing crimson—“lady, to the kindness and generosity of yourself and the people around you my unfortunate companions and myself are indebted for our lives; nay, doubly indebted, for even after we were so nobly rescued from the waves we should have perished, had you not supplied us with the shelter and restoratives we so sadly needed;” and at the termination of this, to him, unusually long speech, Granville, the dew of real gratitude glistening in his eyes, again wrung, with sailor-like frankness, the little fingers she extended to meet his outstretched hand.

“Say no more, poor stranger,” she returned, almost as deeply moved as the young man. “No thanks are due to me or mine. The Blessed Virgin and her Holy Son had you in their keeping, and would not permit the black waters of destruction to close over

the heads of those they have reserved for better things in a happier future."

The figurative language the girl employed sounded strange in French, but Robert saw that she was rendering literally the graceful thoughts that would have so well suited her native tongue, rich in harmonious similes, and the devotion with which she kissed the little crucifix hanging from her neck showed that she felt deeply the significance of the words she uttered.

"You are not an Arab, then; you are a Christian?" asked the young man, surprised into abruptness.

"I am an Arab girl," she returned proudly, springing from the seat, and drawing up her graceful form to its full height, "a daughter of the Ben Yeshah, the warrior tribe of the great Sahara; but my mother is an Italian, and I have been brought up in her holy faith."

"An Italian, mademoiselle!" cried he in great astonishment.

"Do not call me mademoiselle!" she said,

sinking back again upon the cushions. "Arab girls have no titles, and are known only by their names. Mine is Zerauna\* Bianca; though my own people call me Zara in the desert, and Bianchetta when we are in the cities."

"And *Zara* you shall always be to me," cried the young man, seizing her hand, and pressing it to his lips. "In the desert you saved my life, and by your desert name shall you ever be known to Robert Granville."

He was somewhat surprised at his own temerity, but the girl seemed gratified rather than annoyed, and, after motioning Granville to be seated, the conversation was resumed.

"And you are a sea warrior, Monsieur Granville?"

"Yes, Zara, I am a sailor; but my friends never call me *Monsieur Granville*; they always say either Bob or Robert."

"Then I shall do the same; and now, Rohbât—is that right?—tell me all about

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\* *Zerauna*. This name is derived from the Persian word *Serân*, which signifies "a white lily." It is rendered in English as pronounced by the Arabs.

your shipwreck, for I can understand nothing that strange old sailor says. But first let me make you comfortable—no, lie down; I am your nurse, and insist upon it. Is that cushion straight?—very well—drink this, and then begin.”

“One question first, Zara. What has become of my companion?”

“He is very ill. The *hhâkim* (doctor) has set his leg, and attended to his crushed hand, poor little boy! but a burning *hhemât* (fever) has possession of his feeble frame; so we removed him, fearing that you would talk as much as the old sea warrior outside. A mighty *feeshâr* (talker) is that old man of many winters. Do all your sailors talk so much and so fast, Rohbât?”

“When may I see him?” asked Granville, half vexed with old Newbould, whose deep-rooted propensity for chattering had brought about this enforced separation between Harry Vernon and himself.

“When the *hhâkim* pleases to remove the seals of silence from the door of his tent,” replied Zerauna; “and now tell me about your ship.”

Comfortably reclining on the cushions of the divan, with a jar of cooling lime juice within easy reach of his hand, Grànvilè recounted to his eager listener every incident of the fatal catastrophe in which he had borne so prominent a part. Nor was it to an unsympathetic ear that he detailed each event of that night of horror, for the girl listened with a rapt attention that revealed the deep interest she took in the narrative and its narrator, her delicate nostrils quivering at certain parts of the recital, and the tears of pity flowing freely from her lovely eyes at others.

"God, who has preserved you, be praised," she said solemnly when the young man concluded.

"Amen," he returned; and for some few moments both were silent, until he said gently—

"And now, Zara, you will tell me about yourself and your mother, will you?"

The girl inclined her head in acquiescence, and proceeded as follows:—



CHAP. XIII.—ZERAUNA'S STORY.

“MY father, Abdallah ibn Khalid, is Marabout and Sheikh of the Ben Yeshah, the most powerful and numerous of the Sahara tribes; my mother, now temporarily residing in the Oasis of Ziban, is an Italian lady, who, in the wicked old days of piracy, was attacked, while journeying from Sicily to Minorca, by one of the Algerine rovers, and, despite a desperate resistance, in which my grandfather and most of his companions fell, their little vessel was carried by overwhelming numbers, and my mother, then a young girl of fifteen, taken captive by the corsairs. She was very beautiful—indeed she is so still—and her forlorn condition attracted the interest of my father, who rescued her from slavery, with the intention of restoring her to her native land; but the

parting never took place, for when the time for separation arrived, the deep love which was inwardly consuming them both could no longer be concealed, and Bianca di Stella gladly gave up her country and her kin, to remain in the wild free desert, the beloved wife of the wandering Arab chief.

“Soon children sprang up around them, and their happiness seemed complete, when one night the *Douar* (encampment of the Ben Yeshah) was surprised by the *Beni-Abadi*, a hostile Tuaric tribe with whom we have had a feud from time immemorial.

“*Had* a feud, not *have*, Rohbât. Understand that,” continued the desert maiden, her dark eyes flashing fire. “The *Beni-Abadi* are scattered abroad by the simoom blast of my father’s wrath, until their very name is rooted out, and the valleys of *Gebel-Tagel* know them no more!

“They stole upon our tents at night, when the Sheikh and his warriors were absent; they were crouching jackals and cowardly hyenas, not sultans of the desert, who strike down their prey by the light of heaven! They fell upon our helpless women and



children with spear, yatagan, and mekahla;\* our camels and flocks were driven off, or wantonly slaughtered; and many women of our tribe, amongst them my mother, were led away as captives. But slavery was not the worst misfortune that threatened the Sheikh's wife. Of her four sons and two daughters, but one remained! all save my brother Azir had perished on the Tuaric lances.

“ But the triumph of the *Beni-Abadi* was brief. Only three days' journey had they led their captives eastward, when a cloud of dust arose in the distant horizon. It was in vain that their chief, finding flight impossible, formed his warriors into a ring, within which were placed the prisoners and the stolen cattle. Like the thunderbolt of heaven from the bosom of the storm-cloud—like the eagle of Atlas on the *zézala* (gazelle) of the plain, dashed down *Abdallah ibn Khalid* and his gallant horsemen.

“ The robbers and plunderers were slain—their bones now whiten the sand—and the

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\* *Mekahla*, the long-barrelled flint musket carried by Arab warriors.

captives were restored to their tribe; but the light sunshine of perfect happiness will never again illumine the faces of Abdallah and his wife. The summer of their lives changed suddenly to gloomy winter, when the offspring of their love died beneath the *Beni-Abadi* spear-thrusts.

“Azir was saved, my dear and only brother Azir; and after leading an expedition against the *Beni-Abadi*, when that tribe was destroyed root and branch, my father devoted himself for several years to the education of his only child. He then determined to visit Mecca, for, although a Marabout, he had never made the pilgrimage, and in 1822, accompanied by my mother, his son, and several of the tribe, he left Bona for Alexandria, proceeding from thence to the Holy City of the Moslems, after seeing my mother comfortably settled at Cairo, where she was to await his return. There I was born, in 1823, and both my parents regarded me as a mark of favour bestowed upon them from on high. At my mother's request I was educated in the Christian faith, and she has had me taught many accomplishments of which a

purely Arab maiden would be ignorant. I am seventeen years old, eight years younger than my brother Azir, who is attached to the person of our noble sultan Abd-el-Kader. And now, Rohbât, I hope your curiosity is satisfied; if not, you must wait until after *diffa*. Go, *Biska*," she continued, addressing one of the two negress slaves, who, squatted near the door of the tent, had been listening with open mouths and rolling eyes to the foregoing conversation, maintained in a language utterly unknown to them—"go and say we are ready for our *diffa* (repast)."

One slave withdrew, whilst the other busied herself in setting forth, near the divan, several small round tables, without legs, some two feet in diameter, and fitted with an uncomfortable-looking rim, four inches in height. In place of linen cloths these tables were covered with a mat of palm leaves plaited in a conical form, for the reception of the dishes with which *Biska* soon re-appeared. Before removing the covers, a basin of water was handed to each of the young people, in whose use *Zara* set *Robert* an example by

washing her hands; then she dipped her pretty little fingers into the dish before her, and, rolling up a morsel of the food into a ball, conveyed it to her mouth with a dexterity that Granville endeavoured vainly to imitate, amidst the scarcely-suppressed titters of the female slaves. The main dish of their repast thus primitively eaten was *cuscassou*, a compound which forms the principal food of the inhabitants throughout the whole of Northern Africa.

Although awkward at making up the little balls which Zara conveyed so easily and deftly to her lips, Robert suffered not failures to discourage him, but persevered in a most praiseworthy manner until his table was cleared, when water for washing was again handed by the slaves, the tables removed, and coffee brought—rich brown fragrant Mocha, such as the midshipman had never yet tasted in all his wanderings—together with pipes ready lighted, a long jasmine chibouque for Granville, and a cooling *shisheh*, with a snake-like flexible tube, for Zara.

Both the young people were stealthily

observing one another whilst sipping their coffee and puffing out clouds of smoke, until by chance their eyes met, when each involuntarily smiled, and the girl promptly asked, "What makes you laugh, Rohbât?"

"I was amused at seeing the way you enjoyed your pipe."

"Does not your wife smoke?"

"Wife!" exclaimed the midshipman, nearly bounding from his seat in horror at the bare idea of a better half. "I am not married, Zara. What made you think that?"

"I thought all warriors bought wives as soon as they could afford it," replied the girl complacently.

"Not in my country," returned Granville, half-indignant, half-amused at the notion. "In England we win the love of our women before asking them to become our wives. And our young ladies never smoke either, Zara. Not that there is any harm in it," he added hastily, seeing the girl's puzzled look; "only it is not the custom in Europe."

"I am an Arab, not a dweller in dull stone cities," returned the maiden proudly;

but Robert noticed that during the remainder of their interview the amber mouthpiece of her *shishkeh* lay idly on the cushions, unheeded and unused. A rather constrained silence ensued, broken at length by the midshipman, who said—

“You mentioned that your brother was attached to Abd-el-Kader, the new Sultan of the Arabs; tell me about that great man whose fame has reached even my distant country.”

Here was a congenial theme, and the girl's dark eyes sparkled with animation as she replied—

“You wish to hear of our noble and gallant Sultan, now fighting for his country and our liberty against the hated *Roumis*,\* who, having possessed themselves of our sea-coast, are further endeavouring to make us their slaves? Oh that my brother Azir were here to tell you of Abd-el-Kader! He has served under his standard since the day when the *Djehad* (Holy War) was proclaimed, and the Arabs of Algeria, united

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\* *Roumi*—Christian; but applied only to the French throughout this volume.

under one leader, rolled back to the great sea the armies of the robber Frank. I was but a little child of seven years old when the *Roumis* landed, but I can remember, as though it had happened only yesterday, the consternation that prevailed amongst the tribes at the successes gained by the invaders, until Abd-el-Kader ibn Mehi-ed-Deen was chosen their Sultan and leader. Then all fears vanished, and every breast beat high with hope. It was a day never to be forgotten, when, mounted on his jet-black steed, the young Sultan galloped along the ranks of the assembled warriors, followed by my father and the chiefs of the Beni-Amer, Beni-Abbas, Beni-Majaher, Beni-Hashem, and numerous other tribes. All the leaders were conspicuous by their high-mettled steeds, brilliant equipments, and burnished arms, but every eye was fixed upon the youthful figure who, clad in snow-white turban and red burnous, rode beneath the folds of the white standard carried by my brother Azir. It was Abd-el-Kader; and when he reined in his horse before the assembled multitude, crying aloud, 'Il Dje-

had! Il Djehad! Rally round my standard, sons of the desert. Fight for liberty and independence, for the Paradise of the Faithful lies in the shade of sabres, unsheathed in a holy cause!' When these glowing words reached the ears of the tribes, a yell of acclamation arose, and the warriors, breaking their ranks, crowded round the son of Zohra, kissing his hands, his burnous, even his charger's feet, and imploring to be led against the *Roumis* without an hour's delay.

"Oh! it was a noble sight, and one ever to be remembered! The wishes of the tribes were gratified, for they marched immediately against the Franks near Oran, and, notwithstanding their shells and cannons, forced them to seek refuge in the city. That was the first time that Azir had heard the powder of real warfare speak, but my brother is a lion, and kept close beside the Sultan, whose standard he bore.

"Often has he described to me that combat. Abd-el-Kader seemed to bear a charmed life; his turban and flowing burnous were riddled by bullets, and two chargers—priceless steeds from the Najd—fell beneath



him, yet no hair of his head was touched. Once his life was in imminent danger, for all his body-guard were wounded—amongst them my brother—and he was attacked by three French *Chasseurs*. One he shot dead, another made a thrust at his breast with a lance, but Allah, whose servant he is, turned aside the weapon, which passed under his left arm. There, by sheer muscular power, he held it pressed against his side, as though confined in a vice, whilst a sweeping cut of his scimitar sent the aggressor's head rolling in the dust.\* The remaining *Chasseur* fled, when the Sultan, as mindful of others as he is reckless of himself, galloped to Azir, who lay wounded on the ground, and raised him on his horse, which conducted both to a place of safety."

"A gallant act indeed!" cried Granville, carried away by the enthusiastic recital of the maiden. "And the standard, Zara? Had your brother retained it?"

"He had handed it to one of his com-

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\* Both this incident and the rescue of the wounded man are related in Churchill's *Life of Abd-el-Kader*, page 34.



ABD-EL-KADER IN BATTLE.



panions on feeling himself wounded," replied the girl, "and it was taken out of danger. Oh! it was no thought of the standard that prompted the Sultan to risk his life anew; it was the brotherly affection he bears to all that fight in the holy cause. And yet, tender as is Abd-el-Kader to all his followers, it were better for the traitor or the coward to face the hungry lion than the wrath of his offended sovereign. *Mamoor-ibn-Yuseef* experienced this when he opened an intrigue with the *Roumis*, and showed himself at his *ketna* adorned with a Frankish pelisse, sabre, and pistols. News of his defection reached the Sultan at his camp fifty miles distant from the traitor's dwelling, yet the sun had not drank up the dew from the herbage before *Mamoor* was swinging a lifeless corpse before the door of his tent, still clad in the foreign garment which attested his guilt.

"Oh, I could tell you a thousand anecdotes of our great and glorious chief," continued the girl in earnest tones. "But you are a stranger, and could never understand the devotion we feel for one so noble and so good. You live in a little island filled with

cities built with stone, and know not what independence and liberty are to the children of the desert. We must be free and uncontrolled, otherwise we pine and die. His rugged mountains and boundless plains are dear to the Arab as the gardens and smiling corn-fields of more favoured countries, for there he can dwell without ceremony, heedless and unmindful of the sea of civilisation, which spreads itself over richer lands, but leaves untouched the sandy desert. And this freedom the *Roumis* wish to take from us, to spread their legions over our arid plains, and monopolise the few verdant spots that break their interminable barrenness. You are an English sea warrior, but you have perhaps beheld the lordly eagle in captivity, and have observed how ill the monarch of the crag thrives in confinement. Such are we. We crave for freedom—only freedom; under the yoke of civilisation we should disappear. The great God of both Christians and Moslems has bestowed upon the descendants of Ishmael four precious gifts—camel-hair tents, in place of walled cities; yatagans and spears, instead of

intrenchments; turbans, which teach them to despise diadems; and poems, handed down from father to son through countless generations, in place of written laws. These the Almighty has given us, and these the Franks have crossed the sea to take away. But a Sultan has risen in our midst equal to the gravity of the crisis; the Moslems recognise the sacred mission which the son of Zohra is called upon to fulfil, and not until the last of the invaders have been driven into the ocean which brought them will the standard of Abd-el-Kader be furled, and the tribes return to their flocks and pastures."

"What a noble fellow he must be!" cried Granville. "What would I not give, Zara, to see the chieftain you so glowingly describe? Ay! and to ride beside him if occasion offered, and strike a blow for the oppressed against the greedy despoiler!"

"Would you?" cried the girl, bounding up in her excitement, and seizing Robert by the hand. "Would you fight for Abd-el-Kader and the injured Arabs? Then my dream will perhaps come true. I saw you in my sleep—no hazy uncertain vision, but plainly

and distinctly as I see you now—saw you clad in the flowing garb of my nation, riding beside my brother against the ranks of the red-legged *Roumis*. When you mount your charger, I will myself gird on your sabre, and send you forth to battle with tears of gratitude. I may tell Azir, when he returns, that you will join him; may I, Rohbât?" and she looked earnestly in his face.

Some faint thoughts that duty led towards Tunis, there to report the loss of the *Syren*, presented themselves to the midshipman's mind, but he was young, adventurous, and susceptible, so all scruples melted like wax at the fire of the ardent glances the girl flashed forth whilst awaiting his reply.

"What am I to do with my wounded friend?" he faltered hesitatingly.

"He will join us too when he is recovered," she replied in a tone too decisive to admit of argument; "or my father will have him conducted safely to the nearest port, from whence he can take ship to Tunis. That need not detain you. May I tell Azir?"

"Yes, you may," said the midshipman in his most emphatic tones; "tell him that as

long as life remains in Robert Granville, so long will he strive to free the Arab tribes from the tyrannical dominion of the French."

"Newbould," said the young man to the old quartermaster, whom he found devouring the remains of his own stew with considerable satisfaction, "I am going to join the Arabs against the French."

"And turn horse-soldier, sir?" asked the sailor.

"Yes, if you like to call it that."

"Against who, sir? Against the *Parleyvoos*?"

"Yes," replied Robert.

"Then, damme, I'm along with you, sir. I've always longed to have a slap at them chaps since '34, when we was to anchor off Venus (Venice), with the French frigate *Asmoday* (*Asmodée*), and Bill Styles, as was coxswain to Captain—Why, he's gone! Well, well! to think of me turning horse-soldier when I ought to be bearing up for Greenwich Hospital. Wonders will never cease."

Thus her Majesty's service lost two of its members, and the Arab Sultan gained two recruits.





CHAP. XIV.—THE SKIRMISH.

**ON** the following morning Granville was awakened by the sound of many voices in hurried discussion, above which arose the lowing of cattle and the trampling hoofs of galloping horses, urged hither and thither by their riders with the utmost expedition. Hastening to the door of his tent, he met Newbould.

“I was just coming to rouse you up, sir,” said that worthy mariner, who by some unknown means had procured an Arab burnous, which he wore with an affectation of ease and comfort highly ludicrous to behold. “I was coming to tell you, sir, that the young Emir, my lady’s brother, returned here half-an-hour ago as fast as his horse’s legs would carry him, and the whole camp—

*douar*, as they call it—is about to shift billet.”

“I must see about this,” said Robert. “What are they to do with Mr. Vernon?”

Newbould was saved any reply by the appearance of Zerauna, who from the door of her tent beckoned the young man to approach. He noticed that she had entirely discarded the picturesque finery of the day before, wearing the usual and somewhat plain dress of an Arab girl—a haik and loose linen trousers, but without the absurd and disfiguring *adjar*, with which the women of the desert conceal their features entirely, permitting only the brilliant eyes to flash forth.

“Come in, and I will show you my brother,” was her morning salutation, and with much curiosity Robert entered the tent.

“Azir,” said the girl in French, “here is an English warrior who will fight by our side against the invading *Roumis*. He is, and has been, our guest; look upon him now as a dear friend and a brother.”

The young Arab to whom she spoke, a handsome man of five-and-twenty, whose

black beard and snow-white teeth imparted to his face a most striking appearance, heightened by a long scar which traversed one cheek, advanced towards Bob with outstretched hand, saying in French, though slowly, and with much less fluency than his sister, "My brother is welcome, and he shall be to me as though the same mother had borne us."

Granville cordially grasped the Emir's hand, when Zara continued—

"We are hurrying away from this spot, because my brother has found out that the *Roumis* have despatched a party of men to surprise our camp. He has journeyed at speed to warn us, and now we repair to the Oasis of Ziban, where my mother is at present dwelling. You of course accompany us, Rohbât. Azir will see to your wardrobe, and find you a horse."

"But my wounded companion," faltered Bob. "What is to become of him?"

"The *hhakim* will remain with him, and he will be quite safe. Surely you do not regret joining our cause?" asked the girl sharply.

"Regret! *Au diable* with regrets. Hurrah

for Abd-el-Kader and the Arabs, say I. Give me a horse, Zara, and I am ready to follow you to the jaws of death," cried the reckless youth.

"You must follow my brother, not me, Rohbât," answered the girl, but the glance which accompanied the rebuke robbed it of its sting, and he rushed out to bear the tidings to old Newbould in great excitement.

The *kafleh* was soon in motion, and steering due south to reach the Sahara. At its head rode the Emir and Granville, the latter mounted on a thoroughbred horse, the gift of his friend, and clad in white turban, burnous, and girdle, within which was placed a brace of silver-mounted Moorish pistols, more dangerous probably to their possessor than to his enemies. Several Arabs on dromedaries, all armed with mekahla, pistols, dagger, and yatagan, came next; then followed the women on camels, provided with the *hodjah*, a saddle surmounted by a high framework, covered over with a white woollen cloth, which effectually protected the weaker sex and children from the fierce rays of the sun; next came the flocks and herds

composing the wealth of the tribe, together with the spare horses, camels, and sumpter animals, carrying the tents, water, and general baggage; and lastly, a rear guard of weather-beaten warriors, mounted on swift horses, and armed with spears, in addition to their other weapons.

Although at the outset the Emir stationed himself at the head of the cavalcade, he did not long maintain that post, for the apprehended danger threatened the rear rather than the head of the *kafileh*, and to that place he repaired soon after starting, leaving Granville to ride beside Zara, who could converse with him freely from the back of her dromedary.

“Now tell me, please, why the French think it worth while to despatch a party for the capture of a few harmless women and children, for such you were until your brother’s return with his guard.”

“They do not regard us poor women as at all harmless,” replied the girl, laughing. “For instance, there is one here that they would give a turban full of gold pieces to capture.”

“Not yourself, Zara, surely?” asked Robert, somewhat anxiously.

"Yes, you have guessed right. They have been unpolite enough to offer a reward of five hundred dollars for my capture—poor little me, who am not worth a tenth of that sum!"

"But why? What have you done? Are you joking, Zara?"

"Joking? Not the least in the world. They hate me because I can speak their language, and can interpret their lying documents to our noble Sultan. They are for ever trying to overreach him by their manner of wording treaties, which, after signature, they read in the manner which best suits their own convenience. Such was the celebrated 'Treaty of Desmichels,' which has given rise to so many difficulties and complications between the Sultan and the *Roumis*. They are dogs," she continued, her wrath rising—"dogs, not true warriors. Soldiers fight with sabre, spear, and dagger, not with feathers plucked from a stupid goose."

"And for this they have offered a reward for your capture?" said Robert, astonished.

"For that, and also because they think that, were I once a prisoner, my father, with the Ben Yeshah, would desert the Sultan.

They little know Abdallah, or his daughter either. We would both endure a thousand deaths rather than favour the French cause, as so many recreant tribes have lately done. But God will punish them hereafter, if Abd-el-Kader is unable to sweep them from the face of the earth now. Traitors and cowards! Death by the scimitar of an Arab warrior is too good for such jackals! But look, Roh-bât, look at the old *bâhhrie* (sailor)."

Granville glanced in the indicated direction, and there saw old Newbould engaged in a desperate conflict with the vicious shedromedary on which he was mounted. Unused to any other mode of progression less primitive than his own legs, the quartermaster showed little skill in the guidance of his ungainly brute, twitching the nose-rope, which served as a rein, with no gentle hand, when he required the beast to, as he termed it, "alter course," a treatment which the camel resented by twisting her body into most uncomfortable shapes, and making snatches at her rider's leg. In one of these struggles between man and beast, the bur-nous so lately assumed by the former

became disengaged, and fell to the ground, upon which he gave a tremendous pull at the rein, singing out, "Heave to, you overgrown Jerusalem jackass."

Smarting with pain, the beast gave a writhe, which fairly unshipped old Newbould, who rolled over into the sand, amidst shouts of delighted laughter from the Arabs, both male and female. But in his fall the sailor had never let go the nose-rope, which the camel kept stretched at full length in its endeavours to avoid the blows aimed at its lean flanks. How the battle would have terminated remains uncertain, for the camel is an obstinate brute, and not easy of management; but time was precious, so several Arabs came to the dismounted quartermaster's assistance, one of whom vaulted on the back of the refractory animal with the agility of a monkey, and soon brought it to its knees, when its rider, having recovered his burnous, mounted again, and all proceeded onward quietly.

"Old Newbould is not accustomed to riding, Zara, so you must excuse him," said Granville apologetically.



"How different he must find this from his old life. And you too, Rohbât," remarked the girl.

"It is a change, a great change, certainly," replied the midshipman. "But I should feel gratitude for my delivery from the fate which befell my unfortunate shipmates, and also for the kind friends I have met with on this barren coast. I am very grateful to you, Zara, very!"

The girl made no answer, and they rode on in silence for a few minutes, when an unusual movement took place in the rear part of the *kafileh*, the cattle being hurried forward by those in charge of them, and the guard, with Azir at their head, remaining in a rocky defile, through which they had just passed. Presently a horseman, his eyes glowing with excitement, dashed up to Zara, said a few words to her in Arabic, and galloped back in hottest haste.

"What is it, Zara?" asked Robert, animated at the thought of danger. "Are we pursued?"

"Yes," she replied, "and not by the *Roumis* alone. Their *chasseurs* are just entering the defile, and with them are the *Beni-Mâldok*, one of the coward tribes who

fight for the invading Franks. But Azir will endeavour to check their progress whilst we push on; if we once gain the open plain we are safe."

"*We!*" exclaimed Granville in astonishment. "Do you think, Zara, that I shall leave your brother to provide for my safety? Surely not. I shall return to him, and strike one blow at those who so wantonly attack us. I had some scruples about drawing the sword against a nation with whom, although they are our hereditary enemies, we English are at peace; but this attack drives them to the wind. Push on, Zara, at your best speed. I go to the rear guard. Here, Newbould," he shouted in English; "we are attacked by the French, and must go to the rear and help."

"No, Rohbât," cried Zara; "the old *bahhrie* would be rather in your way than anything else. Let him stay here. Tell him he is to take charge of me, since I am deserted by all my younger cavaliers."

"As you wish. You will find him staunch and true as steel;" and the young man, after giving the necessary orders to Newbould, was wheeling his horse, when she again cried—

“Stay. Do you remember that I promised to gird on your sabre myself when you went forth against the enemies of my people? I am unable to do that now, but take this amulet, once worn by my mother’s foster-brother, a brave and true man, who died in the execution of his duty, and who regarded it as a safeguard against all foes. Take it, and God watch over you all.”

She handed the little talisman, which was suspended round her neck by a chain of coral beads, to Granville, who kissed it fervently, bowed in acknowledgment, and, giving the rein to his steed, hurried to the rear.

The distant report of carbines, growing louder and more frequent as the young man advanced, showed him that the hostile parties were already in collision. On reaching the defile, he found Azir and his men, some forty in number, drawn up in the narrow road leading through the pass, which they were preparing to defend against a considerable body of French and Arab cavalry, upon whom they had already opened a distant and almost useless fire with their long mekahlas.

Many of the Emir’s horsemen had dis-

mounted, and, crouching down under cover of the loose boulders which strewed the bottom of the ravine, were waiting, bridle in hand, to discharge a deadly volley into their adversaries, before leaping into the saddle and charging with the fiery impetuosity of their race.

“There rides Haroun, Sheikh of the *Beni-Mâldok*,” cried Azir, his face livid with fury, and the long sabre scar purpled with wrath. “My children,” he continued, addressing his warriors, “let no powder speak against the dog Haroun, the jackal who crawls at the heels of the Franks, battenning on the carrion they disdain to touch. He is mine; this day shall the ravens of the wilderness feast on his flesh, and the wild dog cloy himself with a traitor’s carcass.”

As the enemy closed they opened a brisk fire on the Ben Yeshah, the *chasseurs* advancing at a slow trot; their Arab auxiliaries, Haroun at their head, dashing forward with wild shouts until within fifty yards of their foes, when they fired their mekahlas at full speed, and, wheeling sharply round, galloped to the rear to reload, when the same

manceuvre was repeated. The bullets flew thickly around the Emir's party, more than one of whom threw his long gun into the air, and, with a wild cry of *Allah-il-Allah*, fell lifeless to the ground.

Azir disdained either to dismount or to take advantage of the smallest shelter, and Granville, who was close beside him, feared every moment that the gallant chief would fall a victim to the balls that, hissing around, flattened themselves against the bare yellow rocks; but though his turban was displaced by one shot, and another passed through his flowing burnous, his person seemed protected by some unseen charm, and he remained motionless in his saddle, watching with flashing eyes every movement of Haroun, until the latter advanced with his tribe to within thirty yards of the defile. Then the Emir's voice echoed through the pass, as, putting spurs into his steed, he shouted forth, "*Allah-il-Allah!* Upon them, sons of the Ben Yeshah!" and, with scimitar glittering in the sun, made straight for the thickest of the foe, closely followed by Granville and his own men.

Azir's whole attention seemed concentrated on Haroun, for he struck no blow save in self-defence, until he had forced a passage to where the chief of the *Beni-Mâldok* was rallying his tribe, who were thrown into confusion by the impetuosity of the attack, and shrunk from the avenging sabre of the Emir, whose fame as a warrior and swordsman was known throughout Algeria.

"Stop, traitor dog!" cried Azir to the Sheikh. "I have sworn by the beard of the holy Prophet that thy head shall dangle this day from my saddle-bow."

Haroun wheeled his horse at the insult, and the foes met in deadly combat, their only weapon the scimitar, for the pistols of both were discharged. But the struggle was unequal, for the *chasseurs* had come up, and, overwhelmed by the numerical superiority of the foe, such of the Ben Yeshah as had escaped with life were slowly retreating, followed up vigorously by the French. The Emir, too much engrossed to observe this, was pressing forward to meet the chief, when a shot struck his horse in the brain, and both rider and steed came heavily to the earth.

“Off with the dog’s head,” cried Haroun, leaping from his saddle, and advancing, sabre in hand, to perform that kindly office towards his prostrate foe.

But Granville, who had been laying about him like a Paladin of old, and had dismounted a couple of Arab warriors, forced forward his horse, and dealt Haroun such a blow upon the shoulder, that he sank prostrate on the body of the man whose life he was about to take. The Emir’s leg was inextricably entangled beneath the carcass of his horse, but his arms were free, and with the rapidity of lightning his dagger flashed forth, to be as quickly sheathed in the heart of Haroun, who expired without a groan, his dead body shielding the victor from the blows which the *Beni-Mâldok* aimed at him.

“Fly, Rohbât, fly to Zara,” cried Azir in a smothered voice. “To your mistress, Lilla,” he continued in Arabic, addressing the mare on which the young man was mounted; whereupon the sagacious animal wheeled round, and set off at full speed through the defile in pursuit of the *kafileh*, whose where-



"OFF WITH THE DOG'S HEAD!"





abouts was faintly discernible by a slight cloud of dust.

As the mare bore him away, Granville turned in his saddle and looked back to ascertain the fate of the Emir. Several *chasseurs* had joined the group of enraged *Beni-Mâldok*, who were gathered round the scene of the combat, one of whom was apparently an officer; but the young man could make out nothing clearly in the momentary glance Lilla permitted him to take. The Ben Yeshah were evidently cut to pieces; their chief either slain or a prisoner; and if any assistance was to be rendered to Zara, he must speed onward, and outstrip the pursuit that would inevitably follow before many minutes.

"Now, Lilla," he said in English, stooping down to smooth the beautiful mare's glossy neck, "take me to your mistress. Take me to Zara."

He loosed the reins as he spoke, and Lilla, with a shake of her head and a little whinny of pleasure at the sound of the maiden's name, darted forth into the desert with the velocity of an arrow from the bow.



CHAP. XV.—A DESERT JOURNEY.

WITH long, easy stride, distended nostril, and unflagging speed, the beautiful Najd mare bore her rider over the heavy sand, into which at every stride she sank fetlock-deep, until the rear part of the *kafileh* came in view, the Arab drovers striving to hurry on the wretched cattle, who, with heaving flanks, frothy muzzles, and out-hanging tongues, were painfully plodding their weary way towards the nearest oasis.

Passing these as though they had been stationary, Lilla continued her onward career until the camels and dromedaries bearing the women were reached, when she singled out, without any guidance, the animal which carried her mistress, and drew up alongside it with a neigh of joyful recognition.

With features calm, yet deadly pale, the

maiden had watched Granville's approach, and on his arrival immediately asked—

“My brother, Rohbât? Has ought befallen my brother?”

“Alas, Zara, I greatly fear that he is a prisoner in the hands of the *Beni-Mâldok* ;” and he related all that had occurred.

“Poor Azir!” said the girl when he had concluded, hiding her face in her hands to conceal the tears which trickled through her little fingers. “My darling, my only brother! He is in heaven now, Englishman, for the *Beni-Mâldok* make not prisoners; least of all one holding the rank and position of Azir. But he slew Haroun?” she questioned eagerly, continuing without awaiting a reply—“slew the false hound who abandoned his countrymen and brethren, to betray them to the Frank? Oh! it was well done! A noble deed to perform, my brother, before departing to a better world.”

“You should not make so certain of his death, Zara. When I last saw him he was seemingly unwounded, and he bade Lilla carry me to you. Surely your own safety is what we must look to next.”

“You are right, Rohbât. If my poor brother has perished, it is the will of God, and could not be averted.” The girl mingled no slight degree of Mahomedan fatalism with her own creed; indeed it could scarcely be otherwise, thrown, as she was, amongst people who firmly believed in a pre-determined destiny from which there was no escape. “The French will press forward in pursuit, and we shall hear their muskets in the rear before half-an-hour has passed. I must push on with my dromedary, and can laugh at the Franks, for, like Lilla, Zareefeh”—and she patted the uncouth animal—“is unmatched for speed and endurance. I shall fly into the desert beyond the reach of the *Roumis* or their traitor allies, who will doubtless steal the cattle, but will be unable to do further mischief. It is about you, Rohbât, and the old *bahhrie* that I feel perplexed.”

“Let us accompany you, Zara,” pleaded the young man earnestly. “Remember that your brother told me to fly to you; indeed he gave you into my charge, so you must not leave me behind in your flight.”

“Can you bear the fatigue of a real desert

journey—you and the old sailor, both accustomed only to sail on the liquid ocean?" asked the girl.

"Surely we can endure what a delicate lady like yourself is willing to encounter?" replied Granville reproachfully.

"You are not desert born, and know not its ways," she returned. "But look not so despondent, for you shall both accompany me. Nay, no thanks, but ride back to the tall Arab, Yuseef, and bring him to me quickly. We have no time to spare."

When Yuseef appeared, Zara entered into an animated conversation with him, of which neither Granville nor Newbould could understand a word, but that it referred to the flight was evident, from the gesticulations of the Arab, and the frequent repetition of the words *mwâyât* and *āattâsh*, which both knew to signify "water" and "thirst" in Arabic. In a few moments all seemed to be arranged, for Yuseef disappeared, returning shortly afterwards with three beautiful dromedaries, evidently belonging to the same breed as Zareefeh,\* and probably of the same family.

\* *Zareefeh* signifies in Arabic "The Elegant."

for they seemed to recognise each other. One of these Zara directed Newbould to mount, instead of the refractory she-camel which had hitherto carried him, and signified to Granville that another was intended for him.

“But Lilla?” said the young man, by no means pleased at the exchange. “Must I give up my beautiful Lilla for that ungainly brute?”

“If you mean to accompany me, you must. Lilla is very pleasant, no doubt, but the journey we contemplate would kill her.

“*Choir!*” she exclaimed, raising her voice, when, as if by magic, the dromedaries fell on their knees, permitting the Europeans to climb into the tall saddles without the slightest difficulty.

“Now, *en avant,*” cried Zara. “Forward, Zareefeh;” and she gently twitched the rein, when her animal immediately broke into a long swinging trot, in which it was speedily followed by the two on which the sailors were mounted; the third remained behind with Yuseef, who retained its nose-rope in his hand.

For the first quarter of an hour neither Granville nor Newbould could do more than hold on vigorously with both hands, and gasp for breath; the rapid pace at which they were moving, combined with the jolting motion peculiar to the camel tribe, rendering them utterly speechless. Some few sentences, so "tarry" in their flavour that I dare not insert them here, the quartermaster managed to jerk out when his animal first started; but even this consolation was soon denied him, and he subsided into a desperate and ludicrous attitude of resignation, which caused a smile to break upon Zara's pale face.

Poor girl! she was grieving for the brother who lay bleeding beneath the Frankish sabres. But as Zareefeh bore her steadily onward, at a pace far exceeding that of the swiftest horse that was ever foaled, the feeling of exhilaration induced by the rapid passage through the air served to raise her spirits, and, if not to dissipate the cloud of grief that overshadowed her breast, at least to admit rays of hope which illumined the future, and made it appear less dark and blank than heretofore.



For at least two hours the girl held on her way without a moment's halt, and Granville was wondering when an opportunity would occur for stretching his cramped and half-dislocated limbs, when, at a word from her mistress, Zareefeh suddenly halted and knelt down, a movement faithfully followed by her companions—too quickly, in fact, for the long-suffering quartermaster, who, quite unprepared for such a movement, was ignominiously thrown forward, and for the second time on that eventful day kissed the sands of the desert.

“We will wait here until Yuseef comes up; he should not be long now,” said Zara, who had dismounted. “How do you like riding an *eshary*,\* Rohbât?”

“I feel as if every bone in my body were broken,” replied the young man; “and my mouth and eyes are filled with sand.”

“Poor Englishman, you are thirsty. Take

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\* *Eshary*, a peculiar breed of dromedaries, held in great estimation by the Arabs, and capable of performing immense journeys. The Arabs have a saying that “an *eshary* will cover as much ground in one hour as a horse will in ten.”

some water from this flask. Nay, drink freely, and hand it to your companion," she added, seeing that Granville simply wet his lips; "Yuseef will bring us up an abundant supply. Stand up on the back of your camel, and see if he is coming."

Greatly relieved by the draught of pure water, the young man complied with the girl's request, and looked around him. He saw now, what had been unheeded in the excitement of their flight, that they had entered upon the desert, the boundless waste of North African sand, penetrable only by such animals as had carried them—the great Sahara, vast, silent, arid, forbidding, incomprehensible!

On every side, far as the eye could range, lay the ocean of sand, ridge beyond ridge of shifting sandy waves, seeming to dance and move in the highly-heated air, a striking contrast to the deep blue vault of heaven, from whence the midday sun poured down in dazzling brightness. Not a cloud, not the minutest fleece of vapour, broke the blueness of that concave; not a bird fluttered in the scorching air, no one living thing was visible.

The awful sense of solitude was stunning, overwhelming; weighing on the mind and brain, and utterly crushing them with its all-pervading immensity. Granville and Newbould had both been at sea, far away from land, and surrounded by the boundless expanse of waters, but no feeling even allied to that which now oppressed them had been then experienced; some sea-bird, or fish, or cloud, or shower, were ever present to give an intimation—faint perhaps, but still *some* intimation—of life and movement. Here all was desolate; the huge area of sand was untenanted, and awful in its naked uniformity.

“I can see nothing,” said Granville, after straining his eyes in the direction from whence they had come, “absolutely nothing. These deserts of yours, Zara, are stupendous in their limitless desolation.”

“They are our home, and we love them,” replied the girl proudly. “This waste of sand has no terrors for us, who, with our swift *esharies*, traverse it as easily as your war steamers plough the stormy ocean. But look,” she continued, “there is Yuseef; can you not see him?”

Granville for some minutes scanned the dancing horizon in vain, but at last distinguished a small black speck in the far distance, which might have been a bush, or a boulder of rock, for aught he knew.

“I see something,” he replied, “but cannot say with any certainty whether it is alive or not. How far away from the *kafleh* are we now, Zara?”

“How far should you suppose?”

“Eighteen or twenty miles, I should think, from the pace we travelled at. But even if that is Yuseef, he will not be here for another hour.”

Whilst these last few sentences were passing, the midshipman had approached Zerefeh, and was leaning against the *hodjah*, which offered some small shelter from the sun.

“Not here for another hour?” said Zara with a smile. “Look again, Rohbât.”

Granville jumped up, and, to his great amazement, saw Yuseef, with two dromedaries, within a couple of miles, and before he could express his wonder at the marvellous speed of the *esharies*, the Arab had joined them, and he then saw that one of the

animals was laden with *zamzamiè*s, or water-bags, provisions, and a few other necessaries.

Immediately he arrived, Yuseef produced some long linen bands, cords, and cotton wool, whose use the girl explained to the wondering Englishman in a few words.

“We are to prepare for a regular desert journey, and you must act exactly as we direct you. Look at Yuseef how he is muffled up, with only his eyes visible; you must envelope yourself in the same manner; but first let him gird you about with these linen bands, which are to prevent the jolting dislocating your bones. See, Rohbât,” she continued, taking up a bandage and winding it dexterously but tightly round her waist. “See! I ask you to do nothing that I escape myself. Let Yuseef prepare you without delay, for every moment is of value.”

Granville submitted without a word to be swathed from the breast downwards, as though his back-bone had been broken, and a surgical bandage neatly put on to prevent the bone slipping; neither did he murmur when the Arab, having filled both his ears and nostrils with wool, proceeded to bind

him on the saddle of his dromedary ; he saw that Zara was taking exactly the same precautions, and was satisfied. But when it came to Newbould's turn, that worthy mariner soliloquised in language that probably the Great Sahara never heard either before or since.

“Fifteen years come February,” Granville heard him mutter, “have I served up the Straits, but never did I think that old Tom Newbould would ever come to such a pass as this! To be wormed, parcelled, and served by a wild Turk ; one's seams caulked with white oakum ; and then parbuckled on to the top of a great beast with a hump like the Rock of Gibraltar, and lashed there as if one was a hen-coop, instead of a Christian petty-officer. Lord! Lord! What would the girls on Common Hard say if”—— but his lamentations were cut short by the starting of the dromedaries.

If they had gone quickly before, they seemed now literally to fly through the air ; and Granville soon saw how necessary were the precautions which had been taken. Without the support afforded by the ban-

dages, the frame would have been unequal to bear the violent jolting of the *esharies* for so many hours; whilst a severe headache, perhaps a *coup de soleil*, would have followed the omission of inserting wool into the ears and nostrils, and muffling up the head.

As it was, the two sailors suffered intensely, when hour after hour passed away, without a moment's halt to ease their aching limbs, or allay the burning thirst that fiercely assailed them. Granville now became sensible of Zara's meaning when she had asked if he could bear "the fatigues of a desert journey." The young man was strong and active, and lacked neither high spirit nor courage, yet there were moments when, glancing round at the eternal waste of sand by which they were surrounded, he almost regretted that he had not remained behind with the *kafleh*, and run his chance of being taken prisoner, or killed, by the French *chasseurs*. But such ideas were always dispelled by one glance at the delicate girl who rode behind him, her eyes—all of her that was visible—flashing forth the looks of encouragement that her tongue was unable to speak.

Onward, onward—ever onward, rushed the *esharies*, without any apparent distress, or the slightest abatement of their speed. Yuseef headed the party, leading the sumpter-dromedary by the nose-rein; then followed Zara and Granville; whilst old Newbould shifted from end to end of the cavalcade at the pleasure of his *eshary*, over which he had no control whatever. After riding an hour or more, the old sailor had become so dissatisfied with the bumps and jerks to which he was subjected, that he endeavoured to check his animal by tugging at the rein, whereupon the dromedary had given vent to a prolonged bubbling groan, or rather scream, of wrath, and, instead of pulling up, had quickened its pace, and carried the luckless quartermaster alongside of Yuseef. Another tug at the nose-rope produced a second ebullition of anger, which attracted the attention of the Arab, who, guiding his animal close to Newbould's; leant quietly forward, and passed his sharp *handjar* across the rein, severing it, and putting it out of the sailor's power to exercise the smallest control over the beast, except to thrash it, which made it



go faster, the exact opposite of what its unhappy rider wished. Even Granville could not forbear a smile at the woebegone expression of his shipmate's face, on finding himself now at the head, now at the rear of the party, according to the capricious fancy of his animal.

Except the above little incident, nothing had happened to break the monotony, or relieve the tedium, amounting almost to pain, of the journey. Granville watched with hungry eyes the sun sinking in the west, and longed for the moment when he also would be at rest. But the luminary disappeared beneath the yellow horizon; gloom grew into night; the stars shone out radiantly overhead; and still Yuseef led the way without any apparent intention of halting. The young man felt as if his very bones would crack from the cramped and irksome position they had maintained for so many hours, and pride alone prevented him from imploring Zara to stop, if only for five minutes.

Midnight came, the moon rose above the horizon, and shed a silvery light on the desert, when, to the unspeakable satisfaction

of both Englishmen, Yuseef's dromedary sensibly diminished its pace, and continued to decrease it gradually for two or three miles, until finally the cavalcade came to a halt. At the order, "*Choir!*" the animals fell on their knees.

The Arab descended nimbly from his saddle, and proceeded to loosen the rope which confined Zara, after which he performed the same kind office for the Englishmen. Zara leapt to the ground light as a deer, and hastened to Granville, whom stiffness prevented from moving, although he had slid down from the saddle.

"Are you dreadfully fatigued, my poor Rohbât?" she asked kindly.

"A little," he replied; "but I shall be better presently. These *esharies* are hardly so pleasant as Lilla, Zara."

"No, but Lilla would have sunk to rise no more many a long league back. Ask the old *baherie* what is the matter, Rohbât. I have a little *eau-de-vie*, if it would do him good."

"How do you luff up, old shipmate?" asked Granville, tottering over to his

companion, and laying his hand on his shoulder.

"The Lord deliver us, sir! I feel as if my innerds was cable-laid," replied the sailor with a dismal groan.

"What does he say, Rohbât?"

"That he feels rather faint, Zara," replied Granville, who could hardly transpose the quartermaster's nautical simile into French; "doubtless a little *eau-de-vie* and a pipe will do him good. Could you manage a tot of grog, Newbould?"

"A tot of grog!" rejoined the sufferer scornfully. "Where would grog come from in such a God-forsaken hole as this, where there ain't even water?"

"The lady wishes to know if you would like one, you old croaker. Say yes or no."

"Did you ever hear me say 'no' to such an offer, sir?" rejoined the quartermaster in tones from which all fatigue had nearly vanished. "After all, the desert ain't such a bad place," he continued, sipping his brandy with infinite satisfaction. "With a good spring of water and a little rum, a fellow would rub along very comfortably."

Meanwhile Yuseef, having given a large double-handful of dates to each dromedary, rummaged out some food and water, which the whole party attacked, despite their fatigue.

“This is a queer place to halt, Zara,” said Granville between his mouthfuls of cold kid and barley bread, “without either water or shelter. Won’t the camels stray in the night?”

“They will certainly stray,” replied the girl; “but we shall be upon their backs. We continue our journey in half-an-hour.”

All the young man’s pleasing visions of a comfortable pipe and a sound sleep in the sand were dispelled by this intelligence, and old Newbould muttered words concerning the dromedaries by no means pleasing to Yuseef, could he have understood them. But there was no help for it; they must push on or perish; this was apparent enough, and in a short time all four had regained their saddles, when the enduring *esharies* hurried forward, seemingly as fresh as at the moment they started.



CHAP. XVI.—THE BLAST OF THE SAHARA.

THROUGHOUT the remainder of the night the party continued onward with unabated speed; morning broke, and the short halt was repeated; then onward again over the never-changing sea of sand, until late in the afternoon, when Zara motioned Granville to look ahead. He did so, and beheld a few dark specks in the distance, which rapidly increased in magnitude as the *esharies*, conscious that their labours were nearly ended, rattled over the ground at redoubled speed. Soon it became evident, even to the inexperienced eyes of the Englishmen, that the black spots were palm trees; and in a short space the Oasis of Kemân lay before them in all its verdant beauty.

Granville had ample time to admire the

glorious effect produced by this patch of green, set in a framework of yellow sand; for Yuseef, as on previous occasions, slackened speed gradually to a walk, for the purpose, as Zara afterwards informed the young man, of cooling the dromedaries by degrees—highly-bred animals such as the *esharies* being extremely delicate, and apt to take chills, which commonly prove fatal.

“Now, Rohbât,” said the girl, who had unmuffled her face, “you will get a good night’s rest, I hope. If there are any friendly Arabs at the wells from whom we can obtain provisions, we shall remain here a couple of days. How will that suit you?”

“It will be charming, most delightful!” exclaimed Granville, whose admiration was divided between the animated face of the lovely girl and the ever-increasing beauty of the emerald-green oasis. “But look, Zara; they are coming forth to welcome us. I see a whole troop of cavalry in the palm grove.”

The maiden’s face turned pale, but she made no reply, for Yuseef, who had also seen the horsemen, motioned his companions to halt, and rode on by himself to recon-

noitre. The desert has other dangers as great as drought or simoom; every human being encountered in it must be regarded with suspicion and dread, until it is proved beyond doubt that he is a friend.

“Good heavens! they can never be hostile Arabs, can they, Zara?” asked Granville; but the girl was watching her kinsman Yuseef—who rapidly approached the palm grove, his long mekahla unslung, and lying across the boss of his saddle, ready for immediate action—and gave no heed to the question.

“They are advancing to meet us,” cried the young man. “By Jove! and galloping too! But look, Zara, Yuseef is levelling his gun. See! he fires, and a horseman rolls out of the saddle. We must help him. Come along, Newbould,” and he attempted to urge forward his dromedary.

But Zara said quietly, “They are enemies, and we must fly. Poor Rohbât! you will not taste the pleasures of a grassy couch to-night. Forward,” she called out in Arabic to the *esharies*; when, in obedience to her voice, the willing beasts broke into a trot,



ENEMIES IN THE DESERT.





fast enough to keep them out of reach of the hostile horsemen, though sufficiently slow to permit of Yuseef's overtaking them.

"They are dogs of the *Beni-Maldok*," said the latter to Zara, as his dromedary ranged up alongside of Zareefeh—"Arab traitors with *Roumi* officers. Who would have dreamt of finding them here in the desert? They have taken vast pains to secure thy capture, cousin; but it is written in the book of Fate that thou shalt never fall into Frankish hands while Yuseef-ibn-Salamè exists. What foolish ostriches they be! Had they but kept quiet, we should probably have ridden into their very midst. But God is great, and made the wits of the traitors to wander like silly sheep. We must make for the next oasis now, which is at least one hundred and fifty miles distant; but the *esharies* will hold out, if the Englishmen can. Tell them, Zara, that Yuseef-ibn-Salamè grieves for the hardships they have to undergo;" and the courteous Arab, who sat his animal without the fastening deemed necessary for the others, bowed to the two sailors with a reassuring smile.

But in their inmost hearts both Yuseef and Zara dreaded the fearful journey before them, for their experienced eyes noted that the sun sank to rest with blood-red hue, which indicated that the *khamsin*, or *simoom*, carrying destruction on its burning wings, was abroad over the face of the desert. No alternative, however, was left them but to hasten onward; their water-bags were half-empty, and the provisions they carried almost at an end. Well might Yuseef, as he exhorted the *esharies* to renewed exertions, curse the cunning of the *Roumis*, which had reduced them to this uncomfortable, if not perilous position, and pray Allah to blacken the faces of the infidel dogs.

The hostile cavalry had abandoned the chase on seeing the ease with which the noble dromedaries of the fugitives outstripped their swiftest steeds, and, headed by Yuseef, the party hurried on at a pace which soon sank the tallest palms of the Kemân Oasis beneath the horizon. The stars were now beginning to twinkle, and, feeling safe from further pursuit, the Arab halted, and gave two double-handfuls of dates to each *eshary*;

a draught of precious water, and some slight refreshment, was at the same time taken by the fugitives, who felt the necessity of keeping up their strength for the trials before them.

Granville could not help admiring the philosophical stoicism of Yuseef, who seemed to view their position with the utmost *non-chalance*; so much so, indeed, that the young man could not forbear making some remarks about it to Zara.

“It is not because my cousin is unaware of the danger of our position that he remains confident and cheerful,” replied the girl. “He is more alive to it than any of us; but his firm belief in *kismet*, in fate, prevents him from entertaining the slightest fear concerning the future. If human skill can bring us through, he will do it. If our ill-fortune sends a *khamzin* to overwhelm us, what matter? Man can die but once, and if he do his duty to the last, his future happiness is secured. Yuseef says, ‘We are in the hands of the all-wise and merciful Allah; let his will be done.’”

“There must be much good in a creed

which inculcates such perfect reliance on the Supreme Being," thought Granville; but his reflections were brought to a close by old Newbould, who, riding up to his officer, remarked with much cheerfulness—

"Them *parley-voos* got the weather gauge of us, sir, when they stopped our bearing up for the oozes—though why they call pretty green spots like them 'oozes' is more than I can fathom. But we shall run their d——d blockade all right, sir; you mark my words if we don't."

"Well, Newbould, it is a pleasure to find you so cheerful under the disappointment; I thought you would have growled your camel's hind-leg off."

"Not I, sir," returned the quartermaster. "I have learnt a lesson from Arab Joseph there; and look at that sweet young lady how well she bears it—never a whimper or a tear in her pretty eyes, God bless 'em! You wouldn't expect a Christian sailor to grumble when that heathen Turk keeps a face as smooth as a mill-pond?"

The old blue-jacket said this in perfect faith, and without the smallest idea that he

was teaching his officer a lesson in practical philosophy which he would remember to the last day of his existence.

“Pray God,” said Zara, “that we escape both the *khamzin* and the quicksands, with which Yuseef tells me that this part of the desert abounds.”

“I never heard of them,” replied Granville.

“Oh yes, there are plenty here; fearful abysses, into which entire armies have sunk, to leave no vestige of their existence.”

“Good God, how horrible!” exclaimed the young man with an involuntary shudder. “But do these treacherous places possess no distinguishing mark by which they may be known and avoided?”

“Happily, in most cases, they do. An impalpable sand of dazzling whiteness covers them, spread by the spirits to guard the hidden treasures entrusted to their charge. Were even a feather placed on this deceitful sand, it would sink as though it were a cannon ball. I have often heard the story-tellers of my tribe relate how a Saffite monarch of old attempted to cross the desert

with an immense army, every man of which, except himself, was swallowed up in one of these abysses, leaving no trace to mark their living tomb. But we must trust in God, and in Yuseef, whose skill in desert travelling is known throughout the tribes. See, he tells us to mount. Keep up your courage, Rohbât ; all will end well."

Even in the uncertain light, Granville could discern the interest with which the brave girl regarded him, and by some sudden impulse he grasped her hand, saying—

"Whatever happens, Zara—whether God thinks fit to entomb us in one of the bottomless rifts you have been describing, or to bring us safely to our journey's end—whatever betide, Robert Granville's last thought will be one of gratitude to the maiden who rescued him from shipwreck and from the jaws of death, and suffered him to share her fate in the wild Sahara desert?"

"We are in the hands of the Almighty," returned the girl in a troubled voice ; "but mount quickly. Yuseef is impatient at the delay."

For many hours they held on their headlong course, the Arab leading, and surveying the ground before them with eagle eyes, unrelaxing in their vigilance. Without compass or guide of any sort, save the stars shining overhead, the son of the desert pursued his way, directed seemingly by the unerring instinct which prompts the carrier-pigeon to return to the dovecot which saw its birth. The brief space of deeper obscurity which precedes the first flush of dawn arrived, and Granville was looking forward to the halt which Yuseef would certainly order at sunrise for the purpose of performing his devotions, when a little shriek from Zara called his attention, and he glanced up in time to see the Arab's dromedary stumble on its knees, and then dart off, with a snort of terror, at right angles to the course they had been pursuing. The other animals immediately pulled up, and, in obedience to the shout of "Choir" from the Bedouin, knelt down.

"See, Rohbât," said Zara, pointing to a white sandy spot some fifty feet in length by half that number in breadth—"see, there is



one of the abysses. God be praised, who has preserved my cousin from so sudden and awful a death. Did you notice him wheel his *eshary* so quickly that he brought the poor beast to its knees? Yuseef," she continued to the Arab, who had joined them, "your escape has been miraculous."

"The *djinns* (evil spirits)—may Allah torment them for ever!—spread their snare for me at the hour of deepest gloom, but the holy Prophet preserved his servant. May his name be praised for ever," returned the Mussulman, as he coolly rummaged the saddle-bags for dates, which he gave to the animals; and then, spreading a little square piece of carpet, knelt down to perform the morning prayers enjoined by the Mahomedan religion.

After a scanty breakfast, at which both Zara and Yuseef contented themselves with dates, insisting upon the two Englishmen eating what remained of the kid and barley-bread, Granville walked cautiously to the edge of the chasm, which had so nearly swallowed up the Arab and his dromedary. As Zara had said, a mass of impalpable sand,

seemingly firm as the yellow ground which surrounded it, hid the snare from the eye; but everything which the young man threw upon its surface, even such a light substance as a strip of cotton handkerchief, sank at once, without encountering the slightest apparent resistance. There was a kind of horrible fascination in watching things swallowed up by the insatiable maw of this bottomless pit, and in speculating on the depth they descended without meeting a check, which engrossed Granville until his supply of missiles felt short, when he found his companions preparing to mount.

Until noon they held on their monotonous way, passing within sight of several more patches of white sand, which marked the treacherous abysses, when both Englishmen observed that Yuseef slackened his pace frequently, and gazed anxiously towards the south-west, the direction in which they were proceeding. From this quarter sudden currents of burning wind, scorching as though escaped from a furnace, met the faces of the travellers, and still further augmented the fatigue and discomfort from

which they were now suffering. As they advanced, these hot blasts increased in frequency and force, bearing with them a dust of such exceeding fineness that, despite the precautions they had adopted, it penetrated their eyes, ears, and lungs, making the very act of breathing a difficulty, and creating a burning thirst, which unhappily there seemed little prospect of their being able to assuage. The noble *esharies* toiled on valiantly in the teeth of the wind, doubling their long necks backward to escape the driving sand, and giving vent to the queer bubbling groan peculiar to animals of the camel tribe when in uneasiness or suffering.

Still Yuseef struggled on, turning neither to the right nor to the left, and the other members of the party followed despairingly in his wake, the Englishmen in sore perplexity as to how all this would end. Granville lifted up his head to glance at Zara, but only her back was visible; confiding in the sagacity of Zareefeh, she had loosed herself and turned round in the *hodjah*, thus shielding her face from the irritating dust-storm.

Suddenly, and without any cessation in its

force, the wind shifted to north-west, when the travellers saw advancing towards them many huge tortuous pillars of sand, which writhed about in inextricable convolutions, as though a nest of gigantic pre-historic serpents had risen from the earth, and the reptiles, hungry and ferocious after their long fast, were bearing down upon the fugitives to crush them in their resistless embrace. Some of these sand-spouts measured, as far as the eye could judge, from fifty to seventy feet in diameter, and contained matter sufficient to bury a whole caravan. Granville was under the impression that their guide did not see them; but he soon perceived that in this he was mistaken, for when the writhing mass was within a couple of miles of the party, Yuseef made a sudden divergence, which permitted this terrible-looking, but in reality easily-avoided, desert phenomenon to pass in the rear of the party and gradually disperse. They had been caused by the sudden change of wind, which now veered round to its old quarter, the south-west, and increased in intensity at every moment. There could be no further doubt that for the present all hope

of advancing must be abandoned, for the first breath of the deadly simoom had reached the unhappy fugitives, and they must prepare as they best could to meet its justly-dreaded fury.

Yuseef turned his dromedary round with its hind quarters to the wind, gave the order "Choir," and dismounted as soon as the obedient animal was on its knees. He then led the other *esharies* beside it, and made them lie down in a row, their heads away from the storm. Under the living barricade thus formed the four human beings extended themselves, their heads completely wrapped in the folds of their turbans, while the sagacious dromedaries thrust their noses against each other and remained perfectly motionless.

Hardly was this precaution adopted, when the *khamzin* swooped down on the desert with an appalling violence that made the very *esharies* groan and tremble. The stiff breeze against which they had been painfully fighting their way—the precursor of the real simoom—was but as a summer zephyr in comparison with the red-hot blast that now

howled over the waste, bearing before it sheets of driving sand, which would soon have covered both human beings and animals had they not, by rolling from side to side, shaken it beneath them as it accumulated. The tortures of thirst suffered by the whole party were indescribable. Yuseef, conscious how the Englishmen, quite unaccustomed to any lengthened abstention from drinking, must be situated, endeavoured to procure some of the little water remaining in the *zamzamiès*, but when, after crawling to the sumpter-dromedary, he attempted to rise to his knees, the force of the blast knocked him prostrate, and he was compelled to abandon the attempt.

With head covered, eyes starting from their sockets, and blackened tongue, Robert lay beside Zara, listening to the unabating violence of the storm, and longing—ay, longing—for death to come and release him from the torture he endured.

How long he lay thus he knew not, for his mind was incapable of taking any account of time ; but he felt that the end was approaching, that poor humanity could hold out but

little longer under such torment, and looked forward to the hour of death with the same longing expectation that most men look for a reprieve from the visit of the great Avenger.

“God bless them all at home,” he inwardly prayed, “and have mercy on the poor child by my side. How fondly I would have loved and guarded her had He in mercy permitted me to live. Never until now, when all earthly things are fading from before my eyes, did I know the place she holds in my heart, and how dearly—how fervently and devotedly I love her.”

Struggling against the faintness which was fast creeping over him, Granville with difficulty raised his head to take one last fond look at the Arab maiden. The wind was roaring with appalling vehemence, carrying before it sheets of sand, which beat painfully against the skin, and filled the eyes and mouth. Shielding his face with the hood of his burnous, the young man directed his gaze for the last time at her he loved.

Was it by mere chance, or was some mutual chord struck which caused these two young hearts to beat in unison at this dread







THE SIMOOM OF THE DESERT.

hour when the King of Terrors hovered over both? Granville knew not, but he saw with astonishment that the girl was looking at him from beneath the muffling folds of her turban, and, on their eyes meeting, she drew from her drapery some small object, which she extended towards him. He covered the little hand with kisses—alas! it lay in his so pale and powerless—before examining its contents, and could not refrain from uttering a cry of delight when he saw that it held a small flask containing liquid.

“Drink,” motioned Zara, for the roaring simoom permitted no conversation even if the parched tongues could have framed words; “Drink.”

Though absolutely dying of thirst, Granville would have scorned to preserve his life at the expense of hers whom he loved, and with a supreme effort of self-denial he gently pushed back the flask untasted. A sudden faintness and languor now overcame him, a choking sensation in the throat seemed to prevent his breathing, a few wandering tears escaped from his bloodshot eyes, and he lost all consciousness.



CHAP. XVII.—A HAVEN OF REST.

THE cooling sensation of water dashed upon his face and body attended Granville's first faint gleams of returning consciousness, but on opening his eyes he saw nothing, although he could hear voices; the organs of sight were too much strained to perform their functions immediately. Gradually they became capable of seeing; when he observed several strange Arab warriors around him, and one, whose face he knew well, was kneeling over him supporting his head, and at intervals pouring water over his face, arms, and hands.

Could his brain be wandering still, or was this one of the mocking phases assumed by death from thirst? Azir he left either slain or a prisoner in the hands of the French, and yet he was present here in the Sahara desert

supporting the head and laving the brow of the semi-conscious Englishman! In vain Granville attempted to speak; an invincible knot in his throat prevented all utterance, and his brain was too overwrought to admit of his calling reason to his aid. "It cannot really be the Emir," he thought; "it is some one like him. And yet that sabre-scar. There cannot be two men with precisely similar wounds. Yes, it is him. I know his voice. Azir," he stammered in hollow tones, "where is Zara?"

"She is safe," returned the Emir, for it really was he; "all are safe. Ask no questions, Rohbât; try to drink this water, and then sleep."

With difficulty the young man swallowed a few drops, which gave him inexpressible relief, and within half-an-hour he was able to drink the small draughts which from time to time his Arab nurses proffered. Gradually, also, the knot in his throat disappeared, his senses became clear, and his strength returned by magic, though accompanied with a violent thirst, which the Bedouins would only permit him to assuage by slow degrees. Every

particle of moisture had left the body, and after swallowing a cup of water the mouth immediately became as dry as before ; but in time this passed away, and a drowsy lassitude, against which he struggled in vain, took possession of him, and he fell into a deep and long sleep.

When Granville awoke, his strength was so far restored that he without difficulty gained his feet, and looked around in wondering admiration at the scene before him. His last distinct recollection was refusing the precious flask proffered to him by Zara during the height of the fiery simoom. Then all was arid, parched, desolate, and a flat ; now, on the contrary, he saw himself on a small plain at the foot of a chain of mountains, through which ran a river, its banks clothed with verdure and crops of luxuriant abundance, and its groves filled with nightingales, turtle-doves, and other birds, who by their songs heightened the charms of this enchanted spot. Never did magician's wand cause transformation more complete, and, as he stood at the door of the tent watching the sun set in glory behind the rugged moun-

tains, the young man rubbed his eyes and stared, still almost doubting the reality of the scene before him.

“How could I have been brought here?” he murmured; “and what can have become of Zara, my own brave darling, who would have died of thirst to save my worthless life? Surely I saw Azir, too, in my delirium. Can he have escaped the French lances and the yatagans of the *Beni-Mâldok*? I must question some one, or my senses will again desert me. Ah! here comes Azir himself; so it was no dream, and I shall soon learn the truth. Emir,” he continued, advancing to meet the young Arab with outstretched hand, “did you tell me that Zara—the young lady your sister,” he faltered—“was preserved, and safe from the effects of that awful day, or are my senses deceiving me?”

“You are quite right,” returned the Emir, smiling at Granville’s embarrassment; “all of you were saved, together with your *esharies*; but it would have gone hard with some of you if Allah—whose holy name be ever praised and exalted—had not guided the footsteps of my dromedary to your rescue.”

"God's holy name be praised indeed," replied the young man. "But how came you in the desert at all, Azir? I thought you were a prisoner in the hands of the French."

"The *Roumis* are dogs," answered the Arab scornfully, and soaring at once into the regions of metaphor—"dogs whom the sons of the desert despise. They snared the eagle, the wild monarch of the mountain; but think'st thou, strange sea-warrior, that they could clip his wings or cage him? No; as the missile from the sling he burst from their unhallowed bonds, and his thirty talons buried themselves in the throats of his foe. But," he continued, checking himself, "I came to see if you were sufficiently restored to mount an easy-paced mule and ride up to the *ketna*, where my mother waits to welcome the British warrior who fought so bravely beside her son."

"Certainly I am," returned Granville; "I feel as strong as ever now."

The Emir clapped his hands, when a black slave appeared, leading a charger, and a mule provided with a broad comfortable saddle, in

which Granville ensconced himself without the slightest difficulty. As they mounted the rise, after crossing the river on a rude but safe bridge, the young man saw that the *ketna* was pitched on a rock lying at the foot of much higher mountains, and overlooked the fertile valley they had just left. From the length of time it had been established, the assemblage of tents wore the appearance rather of a stationary village than a movable camp—an idea which was heightened by the regularity of the two or three streets, and the blooming gardens which were around them.

“How lovely!” exclaimed Granville, as a turning in the winding road brought to light several cascades that leapt merrily from rock to rock before joining the river, which flowed majestically beneath. “How truly beautiful! A desert ride makes one appreciate running water, Emir. But tell me about your escape.”

“Wait until we arrive at my mother’s tent, then I daresay Zara will explain all. See, there it stands beneath that group of date-trees.”

At the door of the canvas dwelling the young



men dismounted, and, ushered in by the Emir, Granville found himself in the presence of Zara's mother and of the girl herself, both of whom were apparently talking to old Newbould, who was sitting upon a carpet spread on the floor, but who rose the moment his officer appeared. For only Zara, however, had the midshipman any eyes ; entirely forgetful of the others, he hurried across the narrow apartment, and, seizing the girl's hand, poured forth the pent-up flood of gratitude he felt for her who had so nobly endeavoured to preserve the stranger's life at the risk of her own. The heightened colour with which Zara listened to this somewhat incoherent address perhaps showed that she also was more moved than she cared to confess, but, after a few graceful words of deprecation, she continued, "And now, mother, let me present to you the English officer whom fate washed up on our shores, and who has ventured to strike a blow in our cause against the *Roumi* invaders, in place of joining them, as so many Europeans have, to oppress the wandering Arabs."

Granville bowed low, and then looked with

the greatest curiosity at the Italian lady whose career had been so eventful, and whom he had heard so frequently mentioned by both Zara and her brother. He saw a matron of some forty-five summers, still beautiful, and bearing her years so well that she seemed rather the sister than the mother of her two children. She was dressed in an Oriental garb, very similar to that worn by Zara on her first interview with Granville; but the material, though costly, was entirely devoid of ornamentation, and none of the jewellery to which Arab women are so passionately attached was visible throughout her attire, unless we count as such a crucifix suspended round the neck by a string of pearls. She rose, and, advancing one step towards Granville, kissed him gently on the forehead, saying in English—

“You are welcome, most welcome, although I have heard with deep regret of the sad catastrophe which made you an unwilling visitor to our shores. In the name of my husband and of his tribe I bid you both a true welcome,” and she turned so as to include Newbould in her greeting, “not only as

strangers and castaways—and as such deserving of our best hospitality—but as Englishmen, who are ever first to espouse the cause of the oppressed, and as valiant warriors who have not hesitated to strike a blow in our behalf. Azir has told me how gallantly you fought by his side, Mr. Granville, and I am become Arab enough to love a friend as I hate a traitor or an enemy—with my whole heart. You must be content to abide here a few days with us poor women to recover your strength; on my husband's return he will conduct you to our noble Sultan Abd-el-Kader, and you will soon find opportunities of distinguishing yourself in the good cause you have adopted. Look upon me as your mother, and upon my children as your brother and sister. As long as the tribe of the Ben Yeshah have a covering over their heads, a horse to ride, and a handful of dates whereon to subsist; there shall you find a home and protection, though Philippe of France came in person at the head of his legions to demand your surrender."

"We thank you, lady," replied the young man impulsively; "thank you not only for

the prompt assistance which rescued us from a watery grave, but for the courage and skill which saved us from the burning sands of the simoom. For myself, I shall ever regard your children as my kindred, and the bonds of gratitude are no less potent and enduring than the ties of blood. To your children and your people, lady, we owe a double debt, and while we have strength to strike a blow in the cause of the oppressed, so long will we place our lives and our services at your disposal. Zara," he continued, advancing towards the girl, whose colour rose perceptibly at his approach, "all the thanks I can tender you are, believe me, wholly unequal to express my feelings of gratitude, and this I hope to show should occasion ever offer; but now, in kindness tell me something of the past. How came we here? and how did Azir escape from the hands of the *Beni-Mâldok*? He refuses to tell me himself, and refers me to you. Have pity, then, upon me, and satisfy my curiosity. I remember nothing from the time you offered me your flask—which I shall never, *never* forget—until I found Azir bending over me

with water, that precious fluid which I had never expected would pass my lips again. Even that memory is fleeting and indistinct, and I may say that I know nothing of what has happened from the fury of the simoom to the present moment."

"My children have been taught never to speak of themselves," said the Lady Bianca, "so the office of narrator devolves upon me. The story is soon told. Azir was saved from the spears and yatagans of the *Beni-Mâldok* by the *Roumis*—not from any merciful consideration, you may be sure, but to be detained in a lingering and ignoble captivity, which the Franks foolishly thought would break his spirit and bring about the submission of our tribe. Little did they know my son, or the hatred of the invader which animates the Ben Yeshah. They have formed their idea of the Arab race from the tribes that, either through coward fear or the hope of gain, have submitted to their yoke; but these degraded traitors bear no greater resemblance to the free desert-born Bedouin than yonder uncouth baggage-camel does to the fleet *eshary*, whose shapely proportions

enable it to outstrip the wind. The Ben Yeshah would never have submitted, though their chief's whole family were in the toils of the enemy! But, God be praised, no such trial was in store for my son. One of the *Beni-Mâldok*, whose life he had spared on a previous occasion, retained gratitude enough to connive at his escape, and to enable him to reach a portion of our tribe, of whose vicinity the Franks had no intelligence. Once more amongst friends, he lost no time in starting off for this oasis—the Oasis of Ziban—with several followers, all mounted on swift *esharies*. Whilst in the *Roumi* camp, he had ascertained that the Oasis of Kemân was in the hands of their troops, and had been compelled to hear the taunting remarks of the traitorous *Beni-Mâldok*, who regarded the capture of Zara and her party as certain. But Azir knew the skill in desert travel possessed by Yuseef-ibn-Salamè, and felt little apprehension of your being made prisoners, unless the Franks displayed greater cunning than usual; what distressed him was the thought of the extremities to which you would be reduced by want of water and pro-

visions, and this he rightly conjectured could be remedied, by his striking into the desert on such a course as would intersect your track about midway between this and Kemân. By adopting this route he would cut off a good deal of ground, avoiding the right angle that your party was compelled to make on finding the oasis in the hands of the foe, and could join you with an abundant supply of water.

“Travelling with the utmost expedition, Azir and his men came upon the tracks of your *esharies* at a spot which you had traversed but a couple of hours before, and were pushing on to overtake you, when the simoom in which you had so nearly perished arose.”

“But pardon me,” broke in Granville, “how could your son tell that the tracks he saw belonged to us?”

“Very easily,” replied the lady with a smile. “The desert is a hidden book to those unaccustomed to travel its vast expanse, but to the Arab its signs are as familiar as the leaves of his Koran. Both Azir and his followers know the footprint of every *eshary* we

possess, and by its depth and position can tell the name of the animal, as well as the speed at which it was journeying. In this instance there could be no shadow of doubt as to your identity, owing to the peculiar management of his animal displayed by your old sailor, whose track indicated clearly enough that no Arab was upon its back. But to continue my story: hardly had my son's party commenced to follow you, when the *khamzin* arose, and they were compelled to halt. These storms are very erratic in their movements, and their extreme violence rages over a limited area of ground, so that it is quite possible to see one, without being subjected to its fury; they are also, happily, of comparatively short duration. Thus it so happened that Azir, halting on the edge of the simoom, escaped its wrath, and, immediately the air cleared, was enabled to set forth again, trusting to the keen eyes of his followers to discover your whereabouts, had the storm overtaken you, for all tracks were obliterated by the tempest.

“For several hours they searched in vain; darkness fell, and still no sign of you was



visible. Azir was now a prey to the deepest anxiety, heightened by enforced inaction, for nothing more could be attempted until the morning broke. Reclining by the side of his *eshary*, he was endeavouring to snatch a few minutes' slumber, when he observed the animal raise its head, sniff the air, and utter a cry as of recognition. In a moment he was in the saddle, allowing the dromedary to pursue its own course, and encouraging it by voice and action. The sagacious brute set off slowly at first, stopping at intervals to catch the scent, and finally broke into a trot, which lasted until it arrived at a black mass stretched on the sand—this black mass was the party of which he was in search.

“By a most fortunate circumstance Azir's dromedary had been brought up with Zara's pet, Zareefeh, and had by some mysterious means detected the presence of its companion. To this you all owe your lives, for had you remained without water until the morning, no human power could have saved you.”

“Good God! what a merciful interposition of Providence!” exclaimed the young man with a shudder. “How fearfully my noble

little sister—I may call her so?—must have suffered!”

“She is more accustomed to bear the privations of the desert than yourself and your companion,” replied the lady, “and quickly revived. You came to your senses for a few minutes, but soon sank to sleep, and were brought here in a camel litter. Had you not taken the precaution to provide yourself with the flask which was found by your side, you would have perished.”

“Flask! What flask? I had no flask.”

“Oh, you forget,” replied the lady. “It is very natural. The empty bottle was found against your shoulder, and the Arabs were amused at the foresight you had displayed.”

In utter bewilderment the young man turned towards Zara, but she had slipped unperceived from the tent; then the truth flashed upon him, and he knew that, regardless of the agonising thirst which was consuming her, the noble girl had poured between his lips the precious liquid, every drop of which was worth a king’s ransom.



CHAP. XVIII.—THE FIRE-SHIP.

ON the following day the young Emir left the *ketna*, and Granville found himself entirely dependent on the Sheikh's wife and Newbould for society, as Zara appeared but seldom, and never gave the young man an opportunity of speaking to her alone. This he felt deeply, for the revelation concerning the flask showed that the girl must regard him as nearer to her than an ordinary guest, not even an Arab's boundless code of hospitality extending to the performance of the noble deed of which she was the heroine.

"Could love have prompted her to that crowning effort of self-sacrifice?" was the question that he found for ever running in his head. "Could this lovely girl, the cherished daughter of the proud Arabian

chieftain, have bestowed her heart upon the friendless and destitute castaway?"

Common sense rebuked the vanity that permitted such a thought to arise, but, despite his most strenuous efforts to dismiss it as absurd, the question recurred again and again, until the young man resolved—midshipmen are probably the most romantic, and at the same time most matter-of-fact of human beings, when smarting beneath the wounds of the love-god—to seek an early opportunity of declaring his passion to the girl, and eliciting a reply, which, whatever might be its nature, would be preferable to the state of uncertainty and suspense in which he now found himself.

With this determination he sought the Lady Bianca's dwelling, and inquired for Zara, his ostensible reason being to restore to its owner the little amulet which she had given him when the *kafleh* was attacked, and which he had ever since retained. Both ladies were seated on the cushions of the divan, and Granville saw that the mother's presence rendered any explanation for the time impossible, but hoping by patience to gain an op-

portunity, he said, as he returned the little ornament to Zara—

“You told me that a sad story was attached to this relic—that it had belonged to one who lost his life in the execution of his duty. Would you mind telling me the history, and how the amulet came into your hands?”

“My mother will, I know, willingly do so,” replied Zara, blushing at the gaze of undisguised admiration with which the young man regarded her. “The events connected with it occurred several years before my birth. You will tell us about Giacomo Marsigli, mother, your foster-brother?”

“Most certainly,” said the lady, who had taken the amulet from her daughter’s hand, and was passing the coral beads listlessly through her fingers, her thoughts evidently busy in the distant past—“most certainly; more particularly as the English bore a great part in the events I shall describe. Call the old *bahhrie*,” she continued, addressing a black slave, “it may amuse him to hear the history of a brother sailor, one that would be of his own age too, were he still on earth,” and she sighed.

Old Newbould's arrival destroyed the young man's last hope of obtaining a private interview with Zara; but, consoling himself with the thought that he would be in the presence of his beloved for some time, and being, moreover, anxious to hear the story of the Italian diver, some portions of which he had gathered from Zara, he ensconced himself on the soft cushions at the feet of the Lady Bianca, in such a position as to command a good view of the girl's face, and patiently awaited the commencement of the story, in which he soon became entirely engrossed.

Bianca di Stella, now the wife of Abdallah, chief of the Ben Yeshah, was compelled to recall the days of her childhood, and recount the memories of her life at Messina, her flight with her father, the death of the latter, and her capture by the Algerine rover. All this was unknown to Granville, and the romantic nature of the recital was in perfect accord with his own feelings, so that he listened to every word that fell from the lady's lips with the deepest interest, shared in no small measure by old Newbould, who, though a rough and weather-beaten old tar, seemingly

as hard as granite, belied his unpromising exterior by possessing a heart soft as a woman's and simple as a child's. My readers are acquainted with the earlier portion of Bianca's history; I shall therefore only recount such of the latter part of her narrative as is still unknown to them.

"It was in the year 1810," she continued, "that we fled from Sicily and fell into the hands of the Algerines, and the following year was well advanced before Abdallah rescued me from the hands of the apostate Sidy Melic. Early in 1812, when I was just sixteen, our marriage was celebrated both according to the Christian and Moslem rites, and for the next two or three years I accompanied my noble husband's tribe in all their wanderings. This *ketna*, now our headquarters, was not then built, and we moved from oasis to oasis on the Great Sahara, as the season and the supply of food for the cattle dictated.

"The land of my birth was fair Sicily, where the olive, the orange, and the grape grow on every available foot of soil, and the name of desert is unknown; so that perhaps

you will think I found this nomad life, with no fixed residence, irksome. But it was far otherwise. I had been from my infancy accustomed to the sea, to which, in many points, the ocean of sand bears a great resemblance, and I grew to love the latter with the same deep affection that animates the breast of every true Arab. It was my husband's home, which in itself made me love it; and when I looked round on the high-minded men the desert produced—men without the gloss and varnish of Europeans, it is true, but men who would scorn to tell a lie for all the wealth of the Indies, who would defend their guest against an army, and would mount their deadliest foe and assist him to escape unharmed, had he but broken bread and eaten salt beneath their tents;—when I saw these chivalrous warriors around me, the companions and followers of my noble husband, my heart warmed to the country and the people, and though I often thought of fair Messina and the snow-capped monarch that towers over her straits, it was never with longing or regret—my home, the abode of my choice, was the camel-hair tent



before which my husband's spear was planted.

“Nor was I lonely in the Sheikh's absence, for God had sent little ones to bless our union, and my foster-brother, Giacomo Marsigli, was ever by my side. He, poor fellow, never became quite accustomed to our desert life, and always looked forward eagerly to the few months which, every year, we passed at Bona or Algiers. Then he was within sight of his own beloved ocean, which only affection for me reconciled him to leave. For myself, I loved the freedom of the desert better than the constraint of town life, more particularly in a country such as this, where the law enjoins that women shall go abroad rarely, and then muffled up in the disfiguring *adjar*.

“Do not suppose that my dear husband in the slightest degree controlled my wishes, or desired to keep me immured within the walls of our dwelling. It was not so; I was left free as the air, to come and go as I chose, and to associate with such of my nation as made Africa their home. But I respected the customs—perhaps you would call them

prejudices—of his race, and availed myself but seldom of my freedom, devoting every hour to the education of my little ones.

“We were at Bona when your English Admiral, Lord Exmouth, concluded an amicable treaty with the Dey of Algiers, Omar Pasha, and released a large number of captive Christians. But the Dey, or those about him, burning with fanaticism, and elated by years of immunity, soon broke the compact by a wholesale massacre of my poor countrymen, who repaired yearly to the African coast for the coral-fishery. My husband strove, by every means in his power, to save these wretched men, but the religious hatred of the Moslems was aroused, and all perished, even my life being so much endangered that we deemed it advisable to withdraw to the desert.

“This outrage awoke the wrath of your country, and in the autumn of 1816, when we had repaired to Algiers, Lord Exmouth appeared before the city, no longer a messenger of peace, but accompanied by a large fleet, and resolved to exact reparation and indemnity from Omar Pasha. But the latter

had as his chief adviser a man, utterly unscrupulous, who wished only to build his own fortunes on the ruin of his protectors, and who poured poison into the ears of the too credulous Dey. This man was the renegade Sidy Melic, from whose wicked toils my noble husband had before rescued me.

“Deceived by the misrepresentations of the traitor, and regardless of the sounder advice offered by my husband and other loyal subjects, Omar laughed to scorn the indignant protests of the British Consul, and finally was mad enough to imprison him, together with a whole boat’s crew belonging to an English sloop-of-war then lying off Algiers. It was the act of a madman, and his triumph was short-lived, for, without any warning, the British fleet appeared in the offing, and sent a boat ashore with peremptory written conditions. To these the Dey, instigated by the renegade, returned no reply; when, to the terror and surprise of the whole population, the Admiral sailed straight into the harbour, anchored within a hundred yards of the mole, and opened a terrific fire of shot and shell, in return for the few ill-directed

shots with which the garrison had attempted to arrest his progress.

“Whatever may be their faults, the Algerines are a brave race, and the strong fortifications which defend the city from the seaward opened a destructive fire on the ships, which they fully expected would cut their cables and sail away in disorder. But they little knew the foe they were called upon to encounter. Instead of retiring, the British vessels anchored close to the mole, and poured out an uninterrupted hail of missiles, which blew up the magazines, burnt the vessels in the inner harbour, knocked the fortifications to pieces, and set the city on fire in several places.

“It was then that the Dey grew seriously alarmed, and commanded Sidy Melic to be sent for, but the renegade was nowhere to be found, until the impatient messengers thought of the old tower, in which was stored the money, jewels, and other valuables, the fruits of piracy, which successive Deys had placed there for safety. From this tower the guard had been withdrawn to man the ramparts, and there the messengers found Sidy, loaded with jewels, and prepared to escape as soon

as the British had gained possession of the city. The double traitor and renegade was dragged before the enraged Dey, whose eyes were now opened to the true character of his treacherous adviser. There could be no doubt of his guilt, the jewels were there in his turban to condemn him, and in fury the Pasha leapt from his divan, and with one blow of his scimitar severed the trembling wretch's head from his shoulders. Thus ended the career of a man whose ability might, in an eastern community, have raised him to rank and opulence, but whose nature was so false and cunning that he could act fairly neither by friend nor foe. His meditated treachery towards me I fully forgive, and may the Blessed Saviour have mercy on his soul," and Bianca reverently crossed herself.

"The mischief was, however, now accomplished," she continued, "and the Dey found it impossible to sue for terms; for, had he done so, the exasperated populace would have torn him to pieces. The conflict must continue, although to every eye, unblinded by fanaticism, its result was fully apparent.



DEATH OF SIDY MELIC.



But I am not going to give you a minute history of the bombardment of Algiers, which is probably as well known to you all as it is to me; I wish only to tell you of what befell me and mine during that fearful day. Have you ever been there?"

Both the Englishmen replying in the negative, she continued—

"The city rises from the sea in the form of a triangle, the base resting on the water, and the apex on the summit of the steep incline upon which it is built. The fortifications—strong batteries mounting many heavy guns—are constructed on the shore and on the outer wall of the mole, from which direction only could an attack by sea be made. My husband was not with me at the time of the bombardment, which was wholly unexpected; he had left several days before on a visit to his tribe, and little dreamt of the danger to which his family would be exposed during his brief absence. Had he been at hand at the critical moment to counteract the designs of the traitor Sidy, possibly the destruction which befell the city would have been averted, and I should not



have to weep the loss of my poor brother. But we are all in the hands of God and the saints, and what He wills is ever for the best.

“My house,” she resumed, after a short pause, “was situated towards the top of the town, at an elevation of several hundred feet above the sea, so that we ran but little risk from the British fire, which was directed against the batteries; the Admiral being too humane a man to slaughter the non-combatant portion of the population. The few male domestics I had were away—either fighting or pillaging, I know not which, for they were Moors—and I was seated on the flat terrace of the house, with my two little ones in my arms, and Giacomo Marsigli leaning over the parapet beside me.

“You can easily understand that neither of us could feel much pity for the robber-horde from whom we had suffered so much, and whom we saw daily treat our co-religionists with every kind of inhumanity. The Arab tribes of the Sahara nominally regarded the Dey as their chief, but, in reality, he had no authority whatever over

them ; and the Sheikhs rarely came into the city, except for the purchase of arms and other warlike necessaries. With my husband it was different. His deep-rooted aversion to Sidy Melic made him view the growing influence of the renegade with the utmost suspicion, and he buried all private animosity against the Dey, and gained his friendship, in the hope of thwarting the intrigues of the traitor, whose ambitious views were well known to him. Still, though on intimate terms with the ruler himself, Abdallah had little in common with his people. As dwellers in the city, he mistrusted them, and scorned the negro blood that ran in many of their veins ; had he been in Algiers when your Admiral arrived, he would probably have aided Omar with his advice, but certainly would never have bared a weapon in his defence.

“ My foster-brother, from his habit of frequenting the mole and quays, was thrown into frequent contact with the unhappy Christian slaves, whose hard fate he strove to ameliorate by every means in his power. Those who have tasted chains and servitude

can never forget the bitter hours of bondage, and Giacomo's heart was as soft as an infant's. One young man, whom he had known formerly in Messina, he ransomed and freed, with the money he earned by diving; and this poor lad was the first victim in the massacre amongst the coral-fishers. Since then, the hatred against the Algerines, which had always swayed my brother, seemed to increase tenfold, and he vowed by the Madonna that, should any opportunity present itself for inflicting a punishment on the pirates, he would embrace it, though he perished in the attempt. Knowing his resolute character, I implored him to remain with me when the British fleet opened fire, feeling confident that his adventurous disposition would involve him in some danger. He consented—indeed, poor fellow! my lightest wish was ever a command to him—and for some time we viewed the terrible drama enacting beneath us in speechless wonder. But as the conflict continued, he grew more and more uneasy, frequently turning to me and saying—

“ ‘Look at those fire-ships, *Bianca mia* ;

if they had a pilot on board them who knew his duty, the whole Algerine navy would be destroyed.'

" 'Peace, *fratello*,' I would exclaim. 'Leave it in the hands of God; He knows what is for the best.'

" Towards the latter part of the afternoon, Giacomo pointed out to me one of the fire-ships endeavouring to stand in among the crowded shipping inside the mole. With straining eyes we watched the few intrepid men on board—from our elevated position we could see down upon the deck,—saw them trim the sails, fire the match communicating with the combustibles, steer the dangerous craft within musket-shot of the opening to the inner harbour, regardless of the hail of bullets that fell around, and finally slip over the taffrail into the small boat towing astern, leaving the floating mine to complete her work of destruction. It was managed with marvellous coolness and dexterity, but fortune favoured the Algerines, for a sudden shift of wind drove the fire-ship on shore, where she was soon enveloped in a sheet of flame, which showed what mischief she would have

wrought the piratical fleet had she sailed in amongst them.

“With heaving breast, and muttered prayers for the success of the Christians, Giacomo had watched this exciting incident, every detail of which he explained to me, otherwise I should have little understood it. When the fire-ship failed in her object, he ground his teeth and wept in his rage and excitement; but his whole features lighted up as he observed her consort standing into the bay.

“‘Now, my darling,’ he cried, ‘now I see the opportunity I have so long awaited. Good-bye, sweet sister. Wear this amulet about your neck in memory of Giacomo. Farewell, Bianca, dear little sister, and may the blessed Madonna have mercy upon you and yours.’

“He pressed a kiss upon my brow and upon the faces of the children, and before I could say a word to alter his rash determination, had left the terrace, and a few seconds afterwards I watched him rushing headlong down one of the tortuous alleys leading to the fish-market.

“Dreading what was to follow, yet unable

to tear myself away, I watched, irresistibly impelled by some fascination against which I struggled in vain, the lessening figure of my devoted brother. I knew that some tragedy would be enacted in my sight, with one that I loved dearly for the principal character; yet I was wholly unable to withdraw my gaze, nor would tears come to my aid, and give my straining eyes relief.

“The fish-market stands upon the sea, and is defended by a strong battery, which was keeping up a well-directed and galling fire upon the nearest vessels of the British fleet. The fire-ship, still flaming on the strand, had been compelled to pass before this fortification, and bear its concentrated fire; her consort would be equally unable to avoid it, but the courage of those on board minimised the danger by standing in so close to the battery that the shot passed over their heads. She was nearly opposite the fish-market when Giacomo arrived there, and I saw him disappear among the crowd of *Colouglis*, Turks, and Moors who manned the ramparts. The smoke was so thick, and the confusion so great, that it was impossible to

discern small objects with distinctness; but affection is a more powerful magnifier than the telescope, and I never lost sight of my brother for more than a few seconds.

“The fire-ship was gliding serenely past the cannon that were pouring shot upon her from every embrasure, her white sails glancing in the setting sun, and making her appear so calm and peaceful amidst the volumes of sulphurous smoke that vomited forth from the rest of the fleet, that one unversed in naval warfare might easily have been pardoned for imagining her a messenger of peace, instead of being an agent of destruction more potent than the leviathans thundering around her. The yells and execrations with which the Algerines watched her pass by within musket-shot testified the anxiety that possessed them, and their best marksmen endeavoured to pick off the solitary figure who was steering the little vessel; but he seemed to bear a charmed life, for though a hundred bullets hissed around him, he remained erect and unmoved, his eyes fixed steadily on the point in the inner harbour which he wished to attain.







GIACOMO AND THE FIRE-SHIP.

“Suddenly a shout of joy rose from the pirates, and, looking steadily at the helmsman, I saw that he was lying doubled over the now useless wheel, whilst the fire-ship, bereft of guidance, was slowly shooting up into the wind, and taking a course which would lead her into the British in place of the enemy’s fleet. After the fall of the gallant steersman a lull ensued, for perhaps half-a-minute, when suddenly another cry from the Algerines rent the air, one of rage and mortification, differing widely from their recent exultant shouts. For a moment my eyes had quitted Giacomo, and I now sought for him in vain ; he was no longer amongst the defenders of the fish-market battery. These men were gesticulating wildly, and firing their muskets at an object in the water, which bore some resemblance to a turban; and then the desperate nature of my brother’s enterprise became apparent. He had leapt from the ramparts into the sea, and keeping far beneath the surface of the water, so deep that the shots of the baffled pirates only pierced his discarded head-dress, was striking out to gain the fire-ship, now drifting helplessly over the

bay. The distance between the vessel and the shore was short, and for a swimmer so powerful as Giacomo but few strokes were needed to reach her; when, however, his head appeared above the water, such a hail of bullets fell around that he saw boarding on the near side would be certain death, and, diving once again, was lost to view, and the pirates thought he had sunk to rise no more. But in less time than it takes me to describe it, his form was seen above the further gunwale of the fire-ship, and in an instant he was at the helm. The firing from the Admiral's ship redoubled in fury to draw off the attention of the Algerines, but the muskets of the latter kept up a steady discharge on my brother, and some of the bullets must have taken effect, for he sank slowly upon one knee, though never for a moment releasing his hold of the wheel.

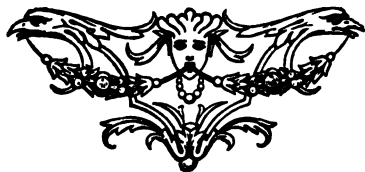
“It was a fearful sight to witness, and in an agony of grief and despair I hid my face in my hands, but the loud cheering of the British compelled me to look again, and I saw the fire-ship, from whose hold smoke and flames were already issuing, sailing

through the entrance of the mole within which were moored the pirate fleet. At what moment Giacomo's brave spirit fled I know not, for the volumes of black smoke obscured my view; but the Algerines said afterwards that a bullet pierced him immediately after the fire-ship entered the inner harbour. I have ever hoped and prayed that this was true, for if only wounded, he must have perished in the flames which shortly enveloped the vessel from stem to stern.

“But his self-devoted task was effectually accomplished, and it was in vain that the corsairs endeavoured to move their vessels away from the floating furnace. Such attempts involved the galleys in inextricable confusion, and the fire-ship drifting amongst them, the Algerine navy, so long the terror of all peaceable traders, was utterly destroyed.

“Such was the fate of my foster-brother, Giacomo Marsigli, whose whole life had been spent in the service of my family, and whose memory I shall ever hold green in my breast. Of my own sorrows Zara has told you; how all my dear children, except Azir, perished at the hands of a hostile tribe, the *Beni-*

*Abadi.* After that dreadful catastrophe my husband made a pilgrimage to Mecca, leaving me at Cairo, where Zara was born in 1823. Since the invasion of our country by the French, we have made head against them with the whole strength of our tribe, every young man capable of bearing arms fighting beneath the standard of our Sultan, Abd-el-Kader. We established this distant *ketna* several years ago, to be removed from the ravages of war. When my husband and son return, they will conduct you to the headquarters of the Sultan; until then, you must submit yourself to our care, and recover the fatigues of your recent journey."





CHAP. XIX.—ABD-EL-KADER.

**F**OR several days the two Englishmen remained at the settlement of the Ben Yeshah, the officer making constant efforts to compass a private interview with Zara, which she ever avoided; and the old sailor amusing himself with the Arab children and their mothers, amongst whom his strange habits were a constant source of astonishment.

That Zara kept purposely aloof from him the young man felt sure, and day by day racked his brains for her motives, in conduct so different from what he had expected. Mounting a horse, he would ride about the oasis for hours, pondering on the seeming perversity of one whom he every day regarded with deeper affection; but, unversed in the ways of womankind, he could arrive at no

solution of the enigma, and sank into a low state of spirits, which the Lady Bianca attributed to *ennui*, and Zara passed by without comment.

Old Newbould, however, soon saw what, to use his own expression, "was in the wind," and endeavoured, in his roundabout fashion, to cheer up the young man.

"The Sheikh's daughter," he remarked one morning, sidling up to his officer in a crab-like way, "keeps herself in dry-dock—don't show her pretty little figure-head in the roadstead."

"Really," replied Granville, with an expression of unconcern which in no way deceived his companion.

"I was passing by her tent last night, and saw the pretty creature kissing the relic that the Italian diver gave her mother, and saying, 'He wore it; my darling held it next his heart.' Now, sir, the diver wasn't alive from she was born, so it could not be for his loss that she was making her lovely eyes red; indeed, I'm pretty sure I heard her say 'Rohbât' more than once."

"Is this true, Newbould, or only one of

your yarns?" asked the young man, much agitated.

"Honour, sir," returned the quartermaster; "honour—bright as a soldier's button or a bucket of water. I've seen it, sir, this many a long day, and so would you too, if you had kept your weather-eye lifting. Lord, I could spin a yarn as long as the main-top bowline about young creatures as hide themselves to prevent their lovers thinking them too forward. Don't you go moping about the oozes, sir, like a three-decker in the doldrums, but try and see her face to face, and she'll soon show her bunting. Bless you, women-folks can't make no manner of stand if you board them on the right tack, more particularly if they keep shivering their head-sails to invite you alongside of them."

"You have given me new life, Newbould," replied Granville, "and I would follow your advice to the letter, and tell her all I think and feel; but she affords me no opportunity—I can never detach her from the Lady Bianca."

"I'll lend you a hand to do that, sir. I think I know how we could manage it. But



look down on the plain, sir; there is a horseman coming at full speed."

"It is the young Emir, I believe, from the way he sits his horse," said Granville, gazing intently at the fast approaching figure.

A few minutes showed that he was right, for, without reining in his horse, the young Arab dashed past the two Englishmen, waving his hand in greeting, and shouting, "Come to my mother's tent."

"What's in the wind now, I wonder?" said the quartermaster.

"Something of importance evidently. Perhaps the French are advancing, and we shall shift our quarters; then I may get a chance of speaking to Zara. But let us hurry up, Newbould."

The Lady Bianca met them at the door of the tent, her beautiful but melancholy face lighted up with unwonted animation.

"My son has hastened onwards," she said, "to tell us that a large body of Arabs, with the Sultan and my husband at their head, will arrive here in a couple of hours. Often has Abd-el-Kader wished to bestow this honour upon us, but circumstances have ever

prevented it. Now you shall see our noble ruler face to face, and will perhaps understand the enthusiastic devotion with which the tribes regard him."

All was stir and bustle throughout the *ketna* when the royal visit was made known. The Arabs, mounted on their swiftest steeds, and armed with every weapon at their command, assembled on the plain, to greet their Sultan with a *fantasia* when he approached the oasis; their wives donned their hideous *adjars*, usually discarded in the freedom of desert life, and from graceful figures became transformed into moving brown sacks, their eyes looking, to use old Newbould's simile, "like two fighting-lanterns behind a magazine screen."

The two Englishmen could only remain wondering spectators of the busy scene, for Azir seemed disinclined to let them accompany his horsemen; and so, choosing a shady spot which commanded a view of the plain, they sat down and restrained their impatience as they best could.

Presently a cloud of dust in the distance showed that the cavalcade was approaching,

and immediately the Arabs, under Azir's guidance, dashed forward at full gallop to meet it, keeping in a compact body until close to those they wished to honour, and then wheeling off in different directions, after discharging their loaded mekahlas into the ground at the very feet of the advancing horsemen. This curious mode of salutation, called the *fantasia*, is peculiar to the Arabs, and apt to shake the nerves of Europeans unacquainted with their habits. After galloping singly about the plain, waving their weapons in the air, shouting loudly, and causing their horses to curvet, the Arabs reunited and repeated the manœuvre until the oasis was reached, when they reined up and dropped quietly in the rear of the Sultan's body-guard.

The ladies now emerged from their tent, Zara attired in a magnificent dress, rich with jewels and embroidery, and looking so wonderfully beautiful, that her lover's heart swelled with pride and admiration on beholding her.

"You must remain here until our return," she said to Granville, who had advanced to

help her into the saddle. "My mother and I must descend to the plain to meet my father and the Sultan."

"May we not accompany you?" asked the young man, unwilling to lose sight of that beloved face even for a moment.

"No; you must remain here until Abd-el-Kader is ready to receive you. Look not so beseechingly, Rohbât; the etiquette of the desert must be observed when the Sultan honours us with a visit," and with a sweet smile she wheeled her horse and hastened after the Lady Bianca, who was already some distance down the steep road.

From their commanding position the Englishmen could observe everything that passed in the valley beneath them, and witnessed the meeting between Abd-el-Kader and the ladies. The chivalrous Arab bowed to the saddle-bow in returning their salutation, causing his horse to rear in the air and advance for some distance on its hind-legs only, a feat in which few of his followers, consummate horsemen though they were, could rival their sovereign. With the Sheikh of the Ben Yeshah on his right hand, and the

two ladies on his left, the Sultan led the way to a spacious tent, which his body-guard had already erected in a shady spot by the side of the river. Into this they entered, and the sailor watched the rapidity with which the warriors unsaddled their horses and pitched their camel-hair canopies around the dwelling of their chief.

“I always thought a top-gallant yardsman was about the smartest chap out, except a harlequin,” remarked old Newbould; “but I’m blessed if these wild horse-soldiers don’t pull a dead heat with them. They run up a village as fast as the old *Arethusa* could make all plain sail. Good hands at piping to dinner too, sir. Look, their cuscassou pots are slung over the fire already. They beat the Royal Marine from Chatham in knowing when it’s grub time. But see, sir, here comes a nigger messenger, most likely to bring you down. I wonder what kind of chap this Sultan is?”

The chief of Abd-el-Kader’s body-guard—for the quartermaster’s “nigger” was no less a dignitary—dashed at full gallop up the rocky pathway, and, saluting the Englishmen,

handed a note to Granville. It contained two lines from the Lady Bianca, bidding them descend immediately, as the Arab sovereign was ready to receive them. Plenty of horses were picketed around the Sheikh's tent, and selecting two of these—Granville's choice falling on the most spirited, and old Newbould's on the quietest animal—they mounted and followed the messenger down the incline.

A few minutes brought them to the Sultan's tent, a large edifice some thirty feet in length by twelve in height, before the entrance to which were drawn up the negro body-guard of thirty men, two of whom advanced and held the stirrups, while the Englishmen dismounted amidst the braying of some half-a-dozen Moorish horns, which the musicians of the retinue sounded in honour of the occasion. Old Newbould seemed on the point of making some disparaging remark concerning the melody produced by these worthies, for Granville heard him mutter something about "d—d windjammers, who would frighten Balaam's ass, much more a desert horse;" but a warning glance from his

officer arrested his criticism, and they both entered the tent, preceded by the Captain of the guard, and Granville found himself in the presence of the master spirit whose sagacity had welded the petty Arab tribes into one homogeneous nation, and whose skill and bravery had so long bid defiance to the overwhelming power of France.

The Sultan was seated on a divan covered with a Persian carpet, and half-reclining on the crimson silken cushions with which the lounge was provided. On similar seats, somewhat lower in height, were seated the ladies, and the chiefs then about their ruler's person. When the Englishmen entered, Abd-el-Kader arose to his feet, and, advancing one step, held out his hand to Granville, saying in English, but slowly and with much effort, as though he had learnt the words by heart, and could only deliver them with difficulty, "Welcome to our desert realm, warriors of the Island Queen."

The young man sank on one knee—Newbould stood twidling his turban, which he had dragged off his head, and looked about as happy as a man with the rope round his

neck—and would have kissed the hand of the Sultan; but the Arab gracefully evaded this homage, raising him from the ground, and motioning him to a seat on the divan at his right hand; relegating the quartermaster at the same time to the care of the Captain of the guard, who seized the bewildered mariner by the shoulder, and conducted him to another tent, where these two strange companions passed the time very happily in staring at each other, smoking innumerable pipes, and drinking coffee strong enough to have half-killed any human beings but a blue-jacket and a negro.

Whilst the attendants were handing round coffee and sweetmeats, Granville had time to observe more closely the extraordinary man with whom fate had brought him in contact. Though he had heard from Zara of the many exploits performed by the Arab ruler, he had never made any inquiry regarding his personal appearance, mentally picturing to himself a tall stalwart warrior, probably bearded to the eyes, and with a stern, perhaps a forbidding, countenance. He could therefore hardly credit the evidence of his own senses, when



he saw seated on the divan a young man of some thirty-five years, scarcely above the middle height, with a symmetrical, though muscular figure, beautifully formed hands and feet, long oval face, with lustrous dark eyes, and an expression of mildness that would have been almost effeminate, but for the black moustache that shaded the upper lip, and the beard that concealed the classic beauty of the chin. It was a face that women might easily be pardoned for loving, so winning and pleasing was its expression even in repose; and when the mobile lips opened, showing the rows of white and even teeth, and the low flute-like voice issued from between them in a flow of uninterrupted melody, but few of either sex could resist the wondrous fascination exercised over all around him by the Arab Sultan.

But, calm and gentle as he was in private life, when duty called him to the performance of his sacred office of *marabout*, or to sweep down upon the red-legged *Roumis* at the head of his desert horsemen, then Abd-el-Kader was a changed being. The slight, delicate hands, that seemed unequal to lift

the snake of the hookah to his lips, would wield the flashing scimitar from dawn until dusk, with a resistless skill that the Franks knew too well; the eyes, that now appeared so soft and languishing, would burn beneath that marble brow like coals of living fire; the lithe and supple frame, now relaxed in the *abandon* of rest and security, would assume the rigidity of iron, and the strongest warrior of the Sahara would succumb beneath the fatigue that his sovereign could undergo without a bead moistening his brow. Then, too, the soft modulated tones became trumpet calls that thrilled to the heart of every listener; whether the Sultan stood, Koran in hand, at the door of his tent, and, selecting some congenial text, poured forth an eloquent appeal to the followers of Islam to aid him in his resistance to the enemy; or, mounted on his jet-black war-horse, shouted forth the battle cry of "Allah and his Prophet for Araby and freedom!"

The nobility and strength of his character were apparent to Granville before the termination of his first interview with Abd-el-Kader. After the latter had questioned him

(in French, now that Newbould was gone) concerning the loss of the *Syren*, and listened with the deepest attention to every detail of that catastrophe, he commenced to speak of his own position—of the war that he was waging against the French—of his resources, and other matters bearing on the condition of his territory, with a shrewd common sense and an absence of all prejudice that astonished his hearer, not only on account of the moderation of his views, but from the fluency and propriety with which he expressed his ideas in a foreign tongue.

As a general rule, in the year 1840, midshipmen were not intimately acquainted with the course of even contemporary history, and beyond a vague knowledge that the French were endeavouring to colonise Algeria, Granville knew little of the real state of affairs in that country, until the waves had cast him on its shore. He therefore listened with the deepest attention to the brief outline of events related by the Arab leader, which, however, I have not the slightest intention of inflicting upon my readers. Of the shuffling treaty evasions to which the

French had condescended he spoke with a quiet scorn that betokened contempt and pity for such unsoldierlike meannesses, rather than anger at the trouble and annoyance they had caused him. Only twice throughout the entire narrative did he indulge in passionate language or invective, and then the circumstances perhaps warranted him, for he was speaking of the Tell tribes who had espoused the cause of the enemy, and of *Roumi* barbarities to Arab women and children. Then his visage changed, the fire flashed forth from his expressive eyes, and his hand unconsciously tightened round the hilt of his scimitar; but he held his temper bound beneath the power of his iron will, and these ebullitions soon died away, though not before Granville had formed a very good idea of how a warrior possessed of such eloquence, and of such a personal reputation, could sway the minds of the wild and impulsive people who had elected him their ruler.

“You now know the main facts on either side,” said the Sultan in conclusion, “and are at perfect liberty to take any course that seems best to you, for Abd-el-Kader stoops

neither to coercion or persuasion. If you wish to leave for England, I will send a *pourparler* to the French outposts, and will guarantee your safety, notwithstanding the affair with the *chasseurs* and the traitorous *Beni-Mâldok*. If, on the contrary, you elect to remain with us and to strike another blow against the invaders, we shall welcome you as a brother, and the best that we have is at your disposal. Our wealth is not great, but our wants are few, and I venture to assert, without fear of contradiction"—here he glanced at Zara, whose lovely face became crimson—"that as bright eyes may be found in the Great Sahara as in the island home of your young and beautiful Queen."

The young man arose, and, bowing, said simply, "I will follow you to death."





CHAP. XX.—THE CAVERNS OF THE DAHRA.

**A** SMALL party of five, mounted on Arab horses, whose distended nostrils, heaving flanks, and drooping ears indicated their exhausted condition, was slowly winding its way up the gorges and ravines lying on the south side of the Lesser Atlas. But few words were spoken by any of the cavalcade, for fatigue had well-nigh worn them out, and each was occupied with the thoughts which thronged tumultuously through his brain. A handsome young man, in the dress of an Arab chieftain, who had been riding in the rear of the party, and reining up from time to time to cast a searching glance towards the south, now pushed forward and spoke a few words of encouragement to a girl bending forward in the saddle with fatigue, although her eyes, flashing forth brightly

and undauntedly, showed the unsubdued spirit that reigned within her breast.

“Bear up, Zara, my sister,” said the young warrior; “another hour will take us to the summit of the range; then we shall be amongst the *Ouled-Riah*, and shall obtain the refreshment and rest we so sorely need.”

“Can the *Ouled-Riah* give me back the mother whom the *Roumis* slaughtered in yonder oasis, or can they restore life to the father who perished in her defence? Repose may bring comfort to these aching limbs, but the Black Angel alone can heal a heart stricken by so many wounds. Where are my people? Gone, all—all gone, save Azir only. Where are my tribe? Slain, or scattered over the face of the wilderness. What is left for me but a prayer to the Almighty to still my heart and let me be at rest?” and the moisture called up by these sad reflections suffused the eyes of the desert maiden.

“Your grief is only too natural, my own sister,” exclaimed the young man, casting a glance of deep love and compassion at his companion. “But many years of happiness

are before you. Your brother still remains, and you have a hundred friends who would gladly sacrifice their very lives to serve you. Cheer up, Zara, and cease to dwell perpetually on the bitter past. Take example from Lilla, who I see is pricking her ears as though she knew her journey was near its close—and here come some of the Kabyles; now we are amongst friends.”

“You are always kind and thoughtful, Rohbât,” said the girl with a deep sigh, and extending her hand towards the young man, who bent low in his saddle to kiss the little fingers, with a look of passionate devotion that was not lost upon the maiden.

Azir had ridden forward to meet the mountaineers, whose outposts had suddenly appeared with pointed mekahlas and threatening gestures, which were speedily flung aside on learning to what tribe the fugitives belonged, and a warm welcome given to a warrior so celebrated as the Emir.

“We can afford you a safe refuge in the caverns of the Dahra,” said the leader of the Kabyles, “whose intricacies have defied the legions of the *Roumis*; may Allah blacken



their pale faces! But we are sorely pressed in every direction, and were it not for our mountain caves, we and our little ones would be, ere this, prisoners in the hands of the Franks."

Under the guidance of the Kabyles, the vast natural caverns of the Dahra, extending for hundreds of yards into the bowels of the earth, were reached, when the travellers threw themselves from their weary steeds, and sought the repose which exhausted nature demanded.

Two years had passed away since the visit of Abd-el-Kader, recorded in the last chapter. The star of the heroic Sultan was slowly setting, and with his declining fortunes were interwoven the destinies of those whom we have followed through these pages. Ever foremost in the fray, the Ben Yeshah had been almost exterminated by the bullets and steel of the French, and the last remnant of the tribe were outcasts and wanderers in the desert. Guided by traitors, the *Roumis* had surprised the *ketna* of Abdallah, when a sabre closed the earthly career of Bianca,

after her husband had fallen dead at her feet in the vain attempt to shield that beloved form from the thirsty weapons of the merciless foe. Zara, Azir, Granville, Newbould, and Yuseef had escaped, and after a terrible journey had reached the friendly Kabyles of the Dahra, who, as we have seen, accorded to the unfortunate fugitives a warm reception. Throughout those weary years Granville and his faithful henchman, Newbould, had fought beneath the standard of the Sultan, winning the admiration of the Arabs by their daring and intrepidity. The young man's love for the maiden had grown until it became the one sole passion of his life; a passion perceived and not discouraged by Bianca, although she intimated that no union could take place until the country was at peace. She had cheerfully faced hardship and privation to follow her own loved husband into the desert, but it seems probable that she would have hailed with joy an opportunity to withdraw her only daughter from the vicissitudes of a desert life. Thus no actual confession of mutual affection had passed between the

young people, nor indeed were pledges and lover's vows needed. Each, by an unerring instinct, could see straight into the heart of the other, and both were content to maintain a fraternal attitude until more quiet times dawned upon them.

Azir and Granville had not passed many hours in slumber, before the shouts of excited men, the shrill cries of women, the lowing of oxen, and the bleating of sheep announced that some unusual movement was taking place.

"These d—d French again," said old Newbould, now a perfect Arab in appearance, advancing towards Granville. "Two or three regiments is marching up to attack the caves, but as long as we have got plenty of water and ammunition, I don't think they can do us much harm in these rabbit-warrens. Why, sir, there's a matter of eight hundred men, women, and children stowed away in these caves now, not to speak of cattle, horses, and such-like; and double the number could be taken in, and room to spare then."

"With provisions and water we shall hold out, doubtless," replied Robert; "but the question is, whether we have got them."

“There’s a little stream runs down from the mountain, close to the mouth of the cave, sir; I’ll go and have a look round to see if we could reach it from the inside,” and the quondam quartermaster hurried away to ferret amongst the crevices of the vast grotto.

Meanwhile, a hasty council of war had been summoned by the chiefs of the *Ouled-Riah*, to which Azir and Granville were invited. Confiding in the extraordinary strongholds with which nature had furnished their country, the warriors determined on holding out, even against the fearful odds advancing to attack them, and a resolve to resist to the last was carried without a dissentient voice. This settled, the women, children, and cattle were removed to the far interior of the cavern, and the entrance blocked up with stones, behind which stood the hardy mountaineers, with musket, dagger, and pistols.

From the platform in front of the cavern the French troops could be seen painfully toiling up the incline, much harassed by the stones and boulders of rock hurled down upon them by the Kabyles; but the latter,

trusting in their caves, abandoned this mode of warfare when the enemy came within rifle-shot, and retreated to their seemingly impregnable fastnesses. The French, now unopposed, speedily gained the platform, and an officer, advancing with two men, summoned the *Ouled-Riah* to surrender their arms and horses, promising them, in return, life, liberty, and the unmolested possession of their hills.

But such terms little suited the desperate Kabyles, who had never bowed their necks beneath the yoke of any conqueror, and they indignantly rejected them; whereupon the French busied themselves in cutting an immense quantity of green brushwood, which unfortunately was immediately at hand for their cruel purpose, and making it up into faggots, that, when fired, would burn fiercely, and yet throw off a large volume of smoke. To place these in front of the entrance to the cavern was certain death, but, by creeping along the hill-side, active men could gain the upper part of the opening, from whence they were enabled to drop down the fascines, without exposing themselves to the fire of the tribe within.

These preparations, the object of which they at once divined, caused great uneasiness to the *Ouled-Riah*, though never for a moment shaking them in their determination to defend the caverns to the last man; and when a messenger again appeared with a summons from the French colonel in command, he was bidden to retire as peremptorily as on the previous occasion, and with the additional notification that the bearers of any further terms would be fired upon.

An hour elapsed, and both sides remained perfectly quiet; the Kabyles waiting for the assault, and the French probably hoping that the tribe would see the folly of further resistance, and save them from resorting to an expedient never exceeded in barbarity by Attila and his dwarfish legions. The *Ouled-Riah*, however, made no sign of submission, and for the last time the French colonel sent forward a flag of truce, but the messenger was shot dead before he could reach the entrance to the cavern, and with a yell of fury the soldiers dashed forward and fired the green faggots.

For some time the stubborn mountaineers

faced the volumes of stifling smoke, and poured forth a continuous fire upon the spot where they imagined their assailants to be, but the French troops were hidden by faggot and flame, and few of the bullets did any damage. Soon the heat forced the warriors into the interior of the cavern, which, from its vast size, was still comparatively free of smoke. Here another short council of war was held, and some of the chiefs advocated submission, whereupon high words, followed by blows, arose, and the Kabyles were at each other's throats instead of fighting against the common enemy.

“In the name of Allah, cease this folly,” cried Azir, throwing himself between the combatants; but his words were unheeded by the maddened men, and a pistol bullet—whether directed by chance or not will never be known—pierced the young Arab through the chest, and brought him heavily to the ground. For one half moment the fratricidal combat ceased, a brief space precious to Granville and Newbould, inasmuch as it allowed them to drag the Emir's body from the spot, before the infuriated

fanatics attacked each other with redoubled frenzy.

"O Azir, my brother, is it to end thus?" cried Granville, supporting the sufferer's head, and bending down over his face in bitter agony.

"It is the will of Allah, and must be accomplished," said the wounded man slowly and painfully. "But remember, Rohbât, that with my dying breath I confide my sister to your care—a sacred charge, which I know you will perform. If it be granted that you escape from this den, take her with you to your own country. My poor mother told me of your love for her, and tell Zara that I approve of it. The notary at Bona has all the papers necessary to prove her birth, and there are large estates in Sicily which will be hers, since the Black Angel has fanned me with his wings. Be kind to her, Rohbât, for she has none but you to lean upon now."

The last words were uttered faintly and with difficulty, and ere they had died away the gallant Arab was at rest.

"Come with me, sir," cried old Newbould,



seizing the young man in his powerful grasp. "Come—the cattle are panic-stricken, and goring the people—we must rescue the young lady, or she will be trampled to death."

"Quick, Newbould, quick. For the love of God, hasten to my darling," cried Granville, half stunned at this new horror; and together the two Englishmen sought the interior recesses of the cavern, now fast filling with smoke, through which could be faintly distinguished the forms of terrified oxen, dashing wildly in every direction, and tossing or trampling all who opposed them; or, worse still, the maddened Kabyle warriors, who were putting to the sword their wives and little ones, to save them from the agonies of death by suffocation.

Guided by the old quartermaster, whose nerve never for a moment deserted him, now stumbling over the body of a dead Kabyle, now stepping into a cranny to avoid the onslaught of some infuriated animal, the two men pushed onward towards the interior, wherein the scenes of horror I have attempted to describe were being enacted. Each





IN THE CAVERN OF THE DAHRA.

moment the atmosphere grew more and more dense, for the French could now pile on their murderous fascines with impunity, and the very act of breathing soon became laborious.

"I cannot go much further," cried Granville. "Are we near her?"

"Close to, sir—bear a hand, we'll be with her in a moment. There she is, sir," cried Newbould, turning an angle of the cave, and revealing Zara in the grasp of a maddened Kabyle, who in a moment more would have brought down upon that fair neck the scimitar which in frenzy he was waving wildly over his head. A pistol bullet from Granville, and a stunning blow with his huge fist from the sailor, laid the madman dead on the ground, and Robert flew to the assistance of the poor girl, whose senses had almost left her.

"O my God! this is horrible—too horrible!" moaned the maiden, shrinking away from the dead man beside her, and listening to the appalling screams and yells which issued from the main portion of the cavern. "Where is Azir, Rohbât?"

"I left him but this minute," replied the young man. "He placed you in my charge, and I am come to fulfil my duty."

A puzzled terrified expression passed over the girl's face, which both men observed with dismay, and old Newbould said to Granville—

"You remain with her, sir; I think I know how we can get a breath of fresh air, and that will give the young lady steerage-way in a brace of shakes—I shan't be gone long, sir," and he disappeared in the thickening atmosphere.

The young man knelt down beside his love, and whispered words of comfort into her ear, but their meaning seemed lost, until a violent fit of weeping brought relief to the surcharged heart. Then she said—

"My brother is dead, Rohbât. I know it."

"And with his last breath enjoined me to watch over your welfare," he broke in.

"Your guardianship will be but a brief one, my poor Rohbât," she replied with a faint smile; "the end of all is very near at hand now," and she pointed to the roof of the

cave where the smoke rolled black and stifling.

“That deadly cloud shall not enwrap us for ever, my darling,” cried the young man passionately, “until you hear the secret that I have kept hidden in my heart since the day we first met by the waters of the blue sea. I love you, Zara—love you with an ever-increasing devotion that I could not much longer have refrained from revealing. Now I have your brother’s permission to speak. May I at this supreme moment cherish the idea that your feelings towards the shipwrecked sailor are fonder than those of ordinary friendship? Speak, my own, my darling, I beseech you.”

Reclining on the damp floor of the cavern Granville supported the dying girl’s head, bending over her face to catch the reply, which came clearly, though feebly, from the labouring breast.

“You love me, and ask whether I return it? Little need to ask that, my darling, for my heart has been yours since our first journey in the desert.”

The loving confession came slowly and

painfully, for the sulphurous cloud had increased in density, choking the lungs and overpowering the brain, yet no single accent escaped the ear for which it was intended. The young man passed his arm round the girl's drooping form, and printed a long impassioned kiss upon that brow, damp with the dew of approaching death.

"My own—my beloved," he murmured tenderly, "God will hear our prayers, and we shall be united in endless bliss in the realms above." But no response answered his fond caress; the noxious atmosphere had rendered the maiden unconscious, and, with her head lovingly pillowed on his breast, the young man sank senseless beside her he had loved so deeply and so well.

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"Am I dreaming, or can this be death?" murmured Robert Granville, passing his hand over his eyes in astonishment at seeing bending over him the mild face of an English lady, in whispered conversation with a youth on crutches, whose features, though attenuated by illness, were evidently those of his old messmate, Harry Vernon.

“You are safe, Mr. Granville—safe, and with friends,” replied the lady, in answer to the young man’s inquiring glance.

“And where is Zara—the young lady who was with me in that horrible cave?”

“She is safe also, and on board the yacht. In a few hours we shall be at Malta, and then you can see her.”

“God be thanked—His mercy is infinite,” exclaimed the young man fervently, clasping his feeble hands in gratitude, while tears trickled slowly over his wan and shrunken cheeks.

“Now try to sleep; Mr. Granville. Your only care is to recover,” said the lady.

“One word more; to whom do I—do we owe our lives?”

“I am Mrs. Vernon,” she replied, “and you are on board my son’s yacht. I shall answer no more at present.”

On the following day the *Kestrel* entered the Quarantine Harbour at Valetta, and the invalids—for old Newbould was among them—were transferred to a comfortable house at Eslima. Granville’s impatience to see his love admitted of no delay, and he was per-



mitted an interview with her in the presence of Mrs. Vernon; over this meeting, however, I shall draw a veil.

“And you want to know all about your rescue?” said Harry Vernon, as he sat by the easy-chair in which his old messmate was reclining. “Well, it is simple enough: old Newbould, whilst rummaging about in the morning of the tragedy to discover if water could be got at from the interior of the cave, stumbled across a rift in the rock, large enough to admit of one person’s entry at a time. This outlet was unknown to the unfortunate Kabyles, and it is lucky for you that it was so, otherwise the poor fellows would have assuredly blocked up the narrow passage in their efforts to escape. When Newbould returned from examining this fissure, he found you both insensible—indeed he feared that you were past all human aid; but he carried you into the open air, concealed you behind some brushwood, and after pouring water over you both—wring from his turban, which he dipped in the stream—he ascertained that life was not extinct, and determined at all risk to make your condition

known to the French, who were grouped around the entrance of the cavern, in silent horror at the awful deed they had perpetrated.

“No weapon was raised as the old sailor passed through their ranks in quest of the commanding officer, then in conversation with my tutor, who had most fortunately accompanied the column to get a glimpse of Arab warfare. Newbould recognised him at a glance as an Englishman, and in a few words put him in possession of the whole case. Medical aid was at once afforded you both, and you were transported in litters to the *Kestrel*, which was anchored in a little deserted bay, awaiting Mr. Featherstone’s return.

“You have made yourself a name amongst the Arabs, Bob, and the French colonel did not half like parting with you, but we passed our word that you should never again bear arms against France, and in the end got you all three on board triumphantly. My mother, who is with me—for I am a sad cripple and invalid now, old fellow,” said the youth, holding up his crushed hand, and looking down ruefully at his

injured legs—"took charge of the young lady, and from the words that escaped you in your wanderings, soon discovered the relations that existed between you. Featherstone is luckily a physician, and amongst us all we managed to pull you through the brain fever that threatened for some days to terminate fatally. That is the whole mystery, told in a few words; now you have only to inhale the pure air and get strong again."

"And how did you get on after I left you?" inquired Granville. "They would not permit me to visit you."

"I was in a raving fever when the French *chasseurs* found me under the care of the Arab *hhakim*, who, it seems, managed my case with great skill. As soon as I recovered they sent me to Malta, and I was invalided home. I left the service of course, and the doctors, thinking that a cruise in the Mediterranean might set me up again, I started in this yacht four months ago, with my mother and Featherstone. Some faint hope of hearing of you made me encourage the doctor in his wish to see Arab warfare, and the upshot was that all who are left of the

unhappy *Syren*, together with the brave girl whose tribe saved our lives, were providentially re-united on the deck of the *Kestrel*. Now, Bob, I have spun you a pretty long yarn, and you must take some rest;" thus saying, Harry Vernon seized his crutches, and hobbled out of the room, leaving the young man to meditate on the strange series of events by which an all-wise Providence had worked out their respective destinies.

But little more remains to be told. Robert Granville and his betrothed, under the tender nursing of kind Mrs. Vernon, soon became convalescent, and a cruise in the *Kestrel* dissipated the last effects of the fearful catastrophe in the caves of the Dahra. On leaving Malta, the yacht went to Bona, when Zara visited the notary, and obtained from him the papers that had belonged originally to the Marquis di Stromboli, together with other documents proving her mother's marriage and her own birth.

Provided with these, the party sailed for Palermo, where the sudden appearance of

the heiress to the Di Stella property caused no slight commotion, and gave abundant employment to the gentlemen of the long robe. But the identity of the girl was beyond dispute, and the courts decided entirely in her favour.

Long before the award was made known, however, the Arab maiden had become the bride of Robert Granville. They now reside at Messina, visited every year by Harry Vernon, who remains slightly lame, but is perfectly able to take riding excursions over the beautiful island with the Granville boys; or to listen to the yarns of old Newbould, now a great authority amongst the coral-fishers; and in the still graceful form of Zara, a few sabre-scars on his own body, and the silver-hilted yatagan and pistols hanging upon his study wall, the staid Sicilian landowner, lord of fertile corn-fields and goodly olive groves, beholds the only outward reminiscences of his desert life, and of the adventurous career of Robert Granville, the midshipman.









